Adirondack Life

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JUNE 2025

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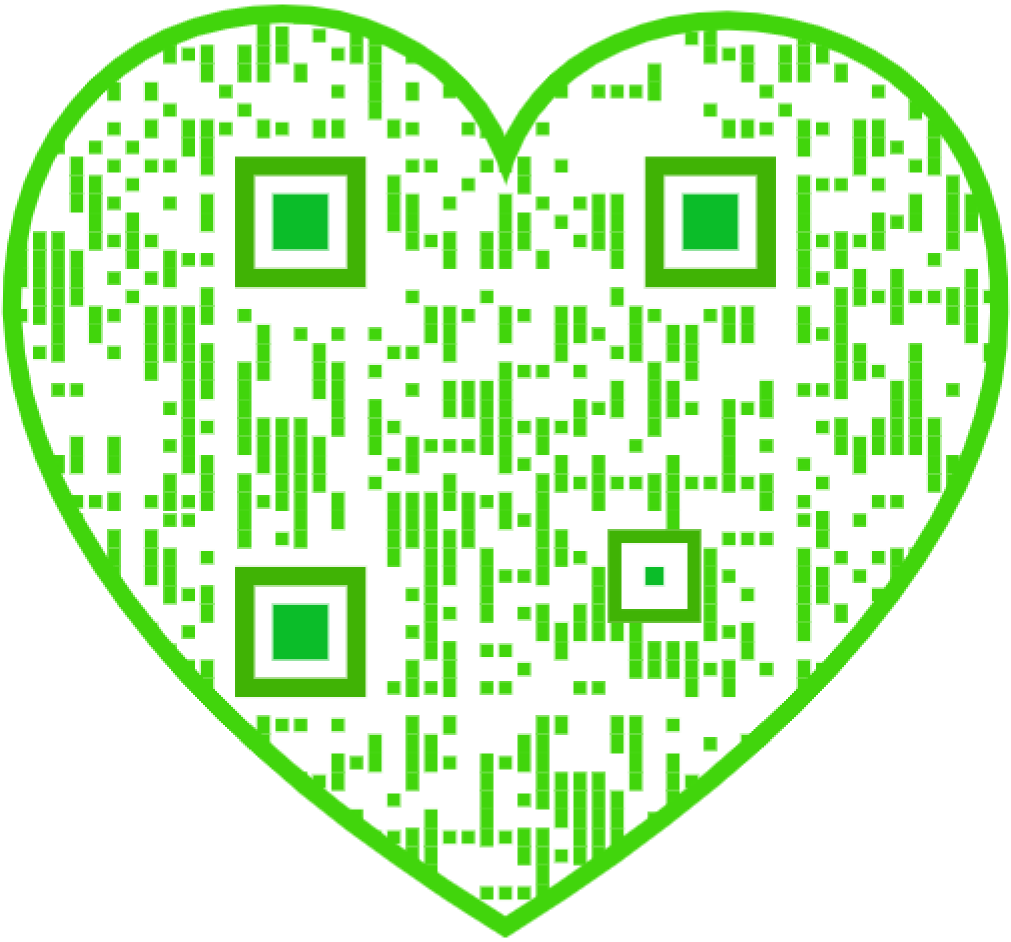

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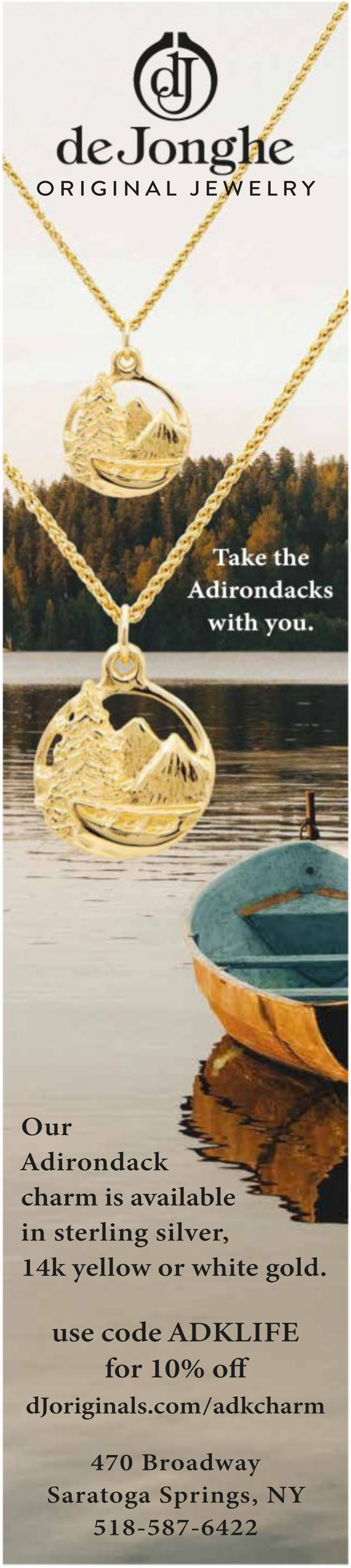

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Adirondack Life
MIGHTY MOUNT MARCY
HONORING A LEGEND

DEEPLY MISSED

Betsy Folwell painted pictures with words. She had a unique ability to put words together that created images—of small towns, of nature's wonders, of little-known Adirondack events. Her accessible language and creative turn of phrase transported readers back in history and into neighbors' kitchens.

The dog-eared copy of *Short Carries* in our Long Lake camp has been read and re-read by family and visitors so many times that we contemplated buying a new one this year (we decided to keep the old one). More than once, I have had to answer questions like "Can *we* sing Christmas carols in the truck next year?" or "When will it be the right time to search in the backyard for nightcrawlers or fireflies?"

Betsy's own image is indelibly printed in our minds, walking or paddling with her golden retrievers through town, along Adirondack trails, or on Blue Mountain waterways.

While her voice and physical presence will be deeply missed by many, Folwell's art will continue to tell her story for a very long time.

Steve Potter
Long Lake, NY

LIFE-CHANGER

I can't imagine the Adirondacks running smoothly without Betsy, although I know she trained enough people to do so that it will continue on, just differently, maybe a little bumpier. She hired me for my first-ever internship, and the summer I spent driving her around as she reported for *Adirondack Life* and finished up her book was formative. Her community seemed to include everyone we came across. Listening to her listen to people was an education and made me realize the Adirondacks, and therefore the world, was so much bigger than I imagined. (And her dry wit kept me from getting too sappy about that, or at least made it possible to keep in mind that that was something to laugh about, too.) I have been endlessly grateful for the opportunity I got at *Adirondack Life*, and the continued opportunities I've gotten to write about the region that she made me appreciate in the first place. I've always kept her in mind when working with interns and early career writers and editors, because I know that helping people—along with writing and listening, her specialty—can be life-changing.

Jaime Fuller
Brooklyn, NY

THE LYRICIST

I'm sorry to hear about the death of Betsy Folwell. I never met her but read *Short Carries* several years ago, with deep admiration, and in a way I feel that I knew her through her lyrical and humane writing, it is that good.

Mark Phillips
Cuba, NY

ANOTHER STITCH

I loved reading the tributes to Betsy Folwell, a dear friend since the late 1990s. But it was her piece, "Following a Thread," that really hit me. No one has done more than she has to weave her community together. Her bequest to establish the Small Wonders for the Central Adirondacks Fund at Adirondack Foundation is another stitch fastening her firmly into the long narrative of the place she loved so much.

Cali Brooks
President & CEO, Adirondack Foundation

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ciation (IRMA) member, her towering intelligence and gracious heart were unmistakable. I think she was almost embarrassed by the constant flow of IRMA awards the magazine won year after year, but at the same time very proud of her team and their work.

Betsy built and you all continue to produce what to me is the quintessential regional publication.

Andrew Jackson, formerly of Vermont Life *and IRMA executive director*

FINDING THE SOURCE

Reading "Mighty Marcy" (April 2025), sparked a memory for me, and I knew if I searched, I could find a photo of four men from Chestertown, who were part of an early effort to cut a trail to the beginning of the Hudson River. I found it! In it is my dad, Lou Seitz, along with Art Tenyson, Spencer La Flure and Bill Murphy. They rode horseback to Lake Tear of the Clouds to help create the trail. I imagine these longtime friends had a great time working together.

Carol Timpone
Belle Harbor, NY & Friends Lake, NY

SCOUT SHOUT-OUT

In the "Climbing Parties" section of "Mighty Marcy" there's a reference to Boy Scouts who assumed the identities of the 1837 party who were present at the summit on the 150th anniversary.

This was a group of Scouts from Connecticut who engaged me to guide them on the trip. Each was assigned the name of one of the members of the party, and was charged with researching him. This was pre-Google and the kids had to dig in actual libraries for this task. They did a great job, and I am very proud of them.

Thomas R. Welch
Gainesville, FL

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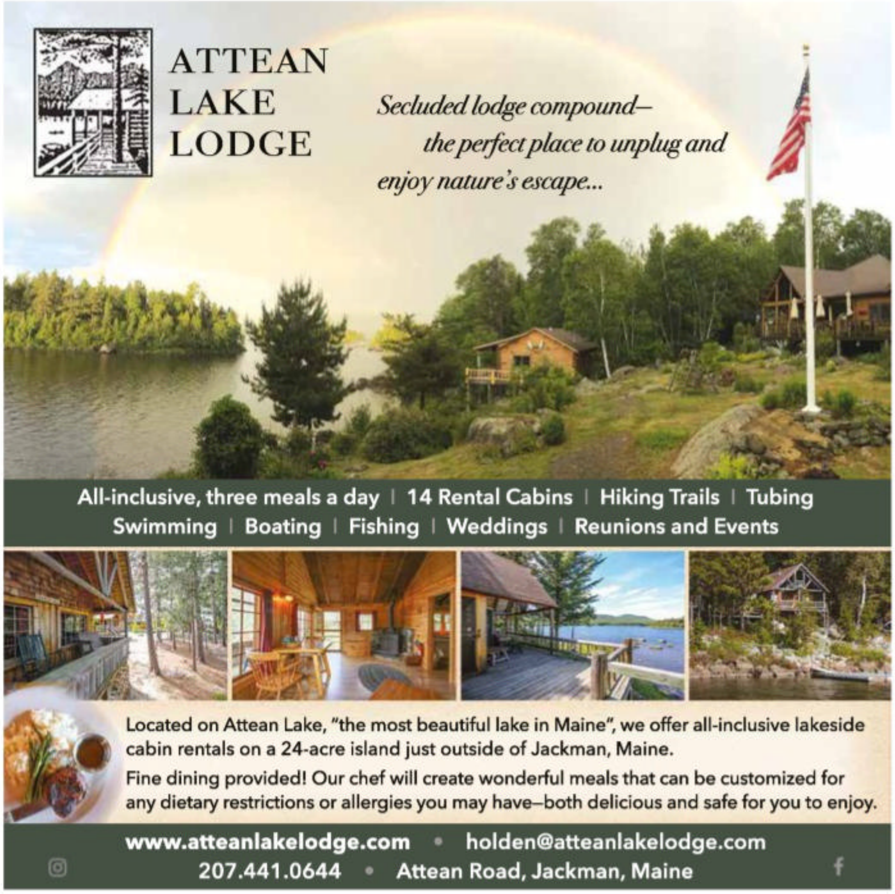
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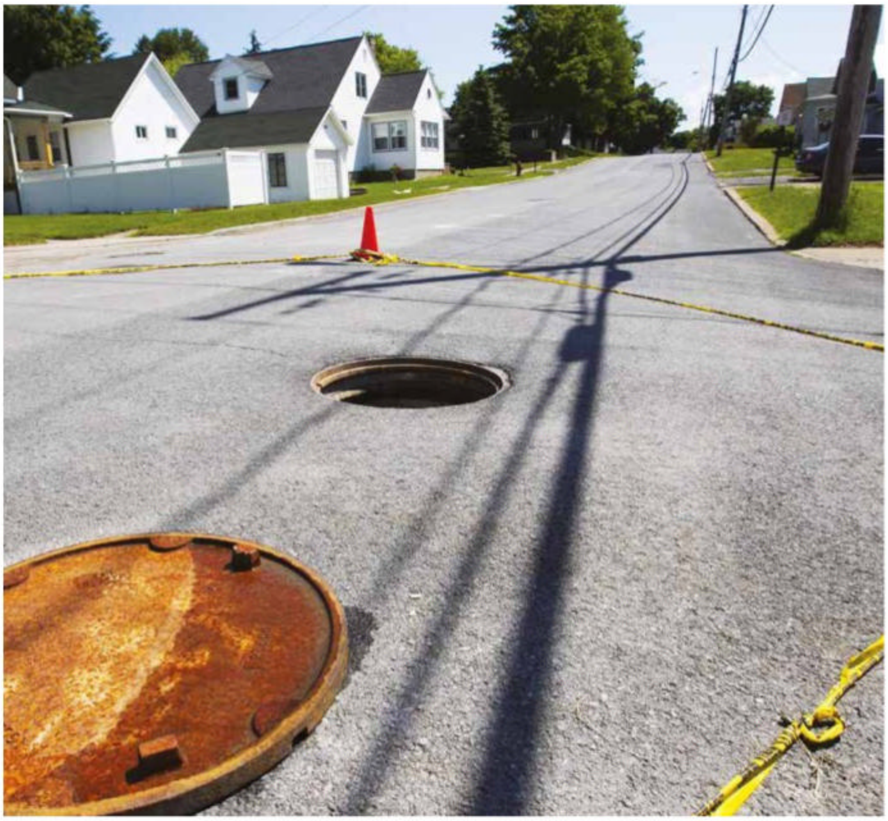
Manhunt Revisited

A decade after two convicted killers escaped from Dannemora prison

BY ANNIE STOLTIE

A mother accompanied her child to the school bus with a rifle slung over her shoulder. Guns were loaded and propped near doors and windows. People slept with hammers and baseball bats. They locked their houses, camps, cars and trucks—some for the first time ever. Armed officers lined roadways, searched passing vehicles, and swept forests and fields while the chop of helicopters drowned out the sounds of Adirondack springtime.

That was a decade ago, when two convicted killers escaped from Clinton Correctional Facility, in Dannemora—a feat that hadn't happened since the prison's imposing concrete wall was erected. It was also a feat that, despite a region dotted with prisons, seemed impossible. Especially at maximum-security Clinton Correctional, opened in 1845 when it was known as Little Siberia, an impenetrable place where the most notorious criminals were locked up, far from where most of them had committed their crimes.



The manhole in Dannemora where Richard Matt and David Sweat emerged on June 6th, 2015.

PHOTOGRAPH FROM ALAMAY

But Richard Matt and David Sweat had done it. With hacksaws they cut through a cell wall and a steampipe, emerging from a manhole on a residential street in Dannemora. Matt was serving a 25-years-to-life sentence for strangling and dismembering an elderly man in Buffalo. Sweat was doing life in prison for shooting a Broome County Deputy Sheriff, then running him over with his car.

These men were dangerous and we were terrified.

Looking back at the events of June 6th through the 28th—after Matt was killed and Sweat was captured—seems "surreal," a word now-retired Major Charles Guess, New York State Police Troop B Commander, uses when recounting one of the more challenging stretches of his career. If you tuned in to the dozen or so press conferences while the inmates were on the lam, you likely remember the incident commander with his unmistakable crewcut and rigid confidence, assuring the public that the escapees would be apprehended.

Guess recalls, "The level of threat couldn't have been higher. These guys were the worst of the worst. There was every reason to believe they would be desperate and ruthless.

"We were concerned about them taking someone hostage, holing up, hiding out in a home," he says. For that reason, residents in Dannemora and beyond were forced to move through perimeter checks and roadblocks; armed tactical teams searched their backyards.

"Where would they have gone? How far could they travel by foot? Were they headed north or south? Any one of 100 different scenarios existed."

There was speculation that the convicts had fled to Mexico or had crossed into Canada. But "unless we had tangible evidence that they had left the area," says Guess, "we had to act and run things like they're here. Our mindset was to keep our heads in a swivel, you never know where they're going to pop up."

More than 1,500 members of law enforcement—state police, county sheriffs, forest rangers, corrections officers, border patrol and FBI agents—joined the search, many slogging into swamps and pushing through tangled woods. They followed some 3,400 leads. "We pleaded with folks—see something, say something. That's what broke this case wide open," says Guess.

On day 21, an off-duty corrections officer discovered that someone had broken into his Malone hunting camp. Nearby, Matt was soon shot and killed. Two days later Sweat was spotted along Coveytown Road, in Constable, two miles from the international border. As he fled, he was shot and taken into custody.

Guess says he's forever grateful for "the way it all turned out," thanks to partnerships with law enforcement and the North Country community, a sentiment that's reflected in his 2017 book, *Relentless Pursuit: Inside the Escape from Dannemora, New York State's Largest Manhunt*. You can also watch Ben Stiller's 2018 Showtime series *Escape at Dannemora*, which includes a cameo by Guess, who served as the show's law-enforcement consultant.

But how did the escape happen in the first place? Now we know that prison personnel—Joyce Mitchell and Gene Palmer—smuggled the hacksaw blades and other contraband in to Matt and Sweat. And after the manhunt, a state Office of the Inspector General's investigative report outlined failures and fixes for Clinton Correctional. Among its recommendations were front gate checks, night counts of inmates, cell searches, metal-detector use, and tunnel and catwalk inspections.

At press time 5,000 corrections officers at 42 state prisons—including Clinton—have just ended a three-week strike over complaints of staff shortages, excessive overtime and a dangerous work environment. Despite the inspector general's report, conditions at Dannemora are still under question, if not at a tipping point.

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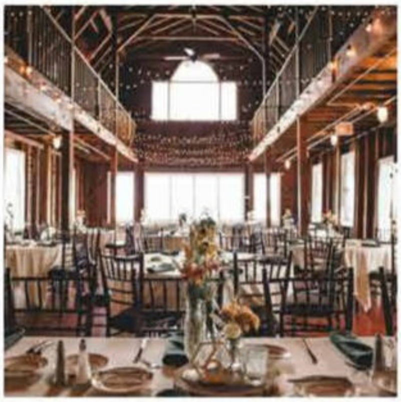

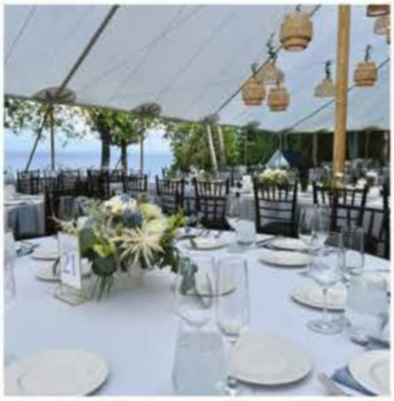

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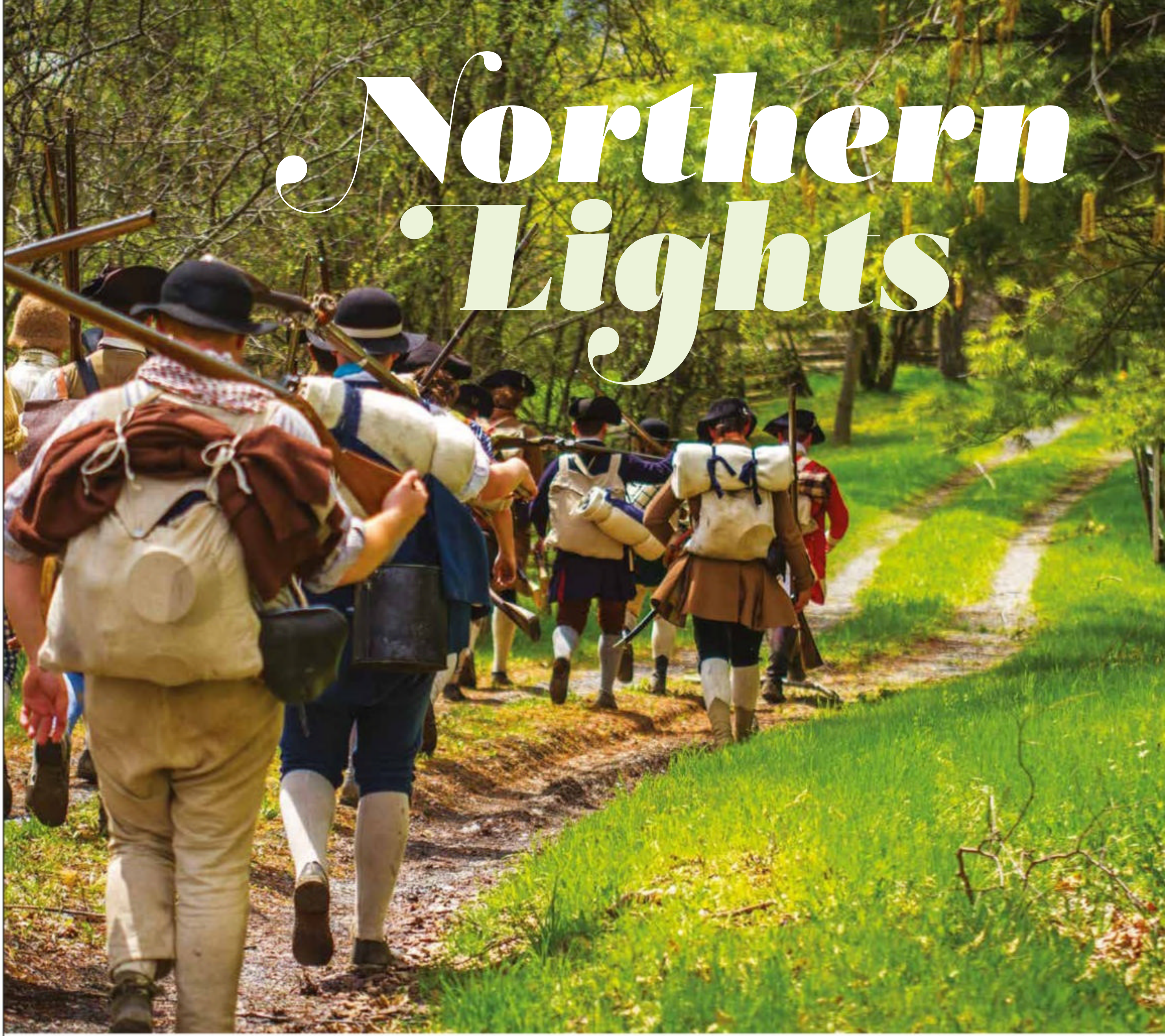

Raiding Party

In the early hours of May 10, 1775, about 80 Green Mountain Boys—a ragtag Vermont militia under the command of Ethan Allen and, temporarily, Colonel Benedict Arnold—paddled across Lake Champlain to seize Fort Ticonderoga. Within hours, and with no serious casualties, the fort was in the colonists' hands, a gambit that secured valuable artillery for the Continental Army, as well as a strategic waterway between Montreal and Albany.

It was the first offensive victory of the American Revolution and, 250 years later, a remembrance of the raid will be one of the first celebrations of America's semiquincentennial birthday bash. On May 9–11, Fort Ticonderoga will host No Quarter!, a three-day event loaded with demonstrations, guided tours and a nighttime reenactment of the storming of the fort and its aftermath. Learn more at www.fortticonderoga.org.

A separate commemoration of the capture of Fort Crown Point, which was taken not long after Fort Ticonderoga, happens at the Crown Point State Historic Site on May 11. For details visit www.lakechamplainregion.com.

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End of an Era

This summer, for the first time in more than 50 years, the Sabattis Scout Reservation on Lows Lake will not host its summer camp—a do-it-yourself retreat with no electricity, no cell-phone service, no cabins, and no dining hall—due to declining demand.

Edwin Theetge, CEO/Scout Executive of Scouting America, Longhouse Council, told North Country Public Radio, “A lot of people say this: ‘Kids today don’t want that [more traditional experience].’ But I push back on that. I think children today are exactly the same as they were 100 or 200 years ago. … It’s what we as parents and adults allow them to do or expect them to do that has changed. Because of that, we have to change with the times.”

The fate of the 1,500-acre property remains unclear.

A High for Lows

The Scouts may be gone from Lows Lake, but access to the remote paddlers’ paradise just got a little easier. After a two-year closure due to maintenance of the Lows Lower Dam on the Bog River, the road and parking lot for the put-in have been reopened.

IF YOU GO: Following Route 30 toward Long Lake from Tupper, turn right on Route 421. The road to Lows Lower Dam is about 6 miles from Route 30.

Lows Lake can be accessed from the Lower Dam launch on the Bog River. Paddle the Bog River to Hitchins Pond, cross the pond and carry around the Upper Dam. Continue on the Bog River to Lows Lake, about 11 miles from the Lower Dam. There are 39 primitive campsites ringing the lake.

On the Map

A tiny bump in the state-owned wilderness between Bloomingdale and Gabriels had a big problem—its offensive former name, Negro Hill. Now, thanks to the research of Paul Smith’s College professor Curt Stager, who mapped out abolitionist Gerrit Smith’s Adirondack land grants to thousands of Black New Yorkers, and the advocacy of Franklin town councilman Rich Brandt and resident Dave Filsinger, the U.S. Geological Survey’s Board of Geographical Names (USBGN) has approved a new name: Murry Hill, in honor of the former landowner. Wesley Murry was granted 40 acres on the hillside in 1846, though he and his family likely never took up residence, opting to cultivate a more farm-friendly property nearby.

“Allowing geographical features to carry racist names meant to humiliate these hard-working families … is a stain on our history which we can correct by honoring the people who were pioneers on a challenging landscape,” Councilman Brandt wrote in his USBGN application.

MURRY HILL PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF CURT STAGER. SABATTIS SIGN FROM THE SABATTIS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION’S FACEBOOK PAGE
VIEW FROM LOWS RIDGE BY NANCIE BATTAGLIA. STUDENT PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF PAUL SMITH’S COLLEGE

Weed Out

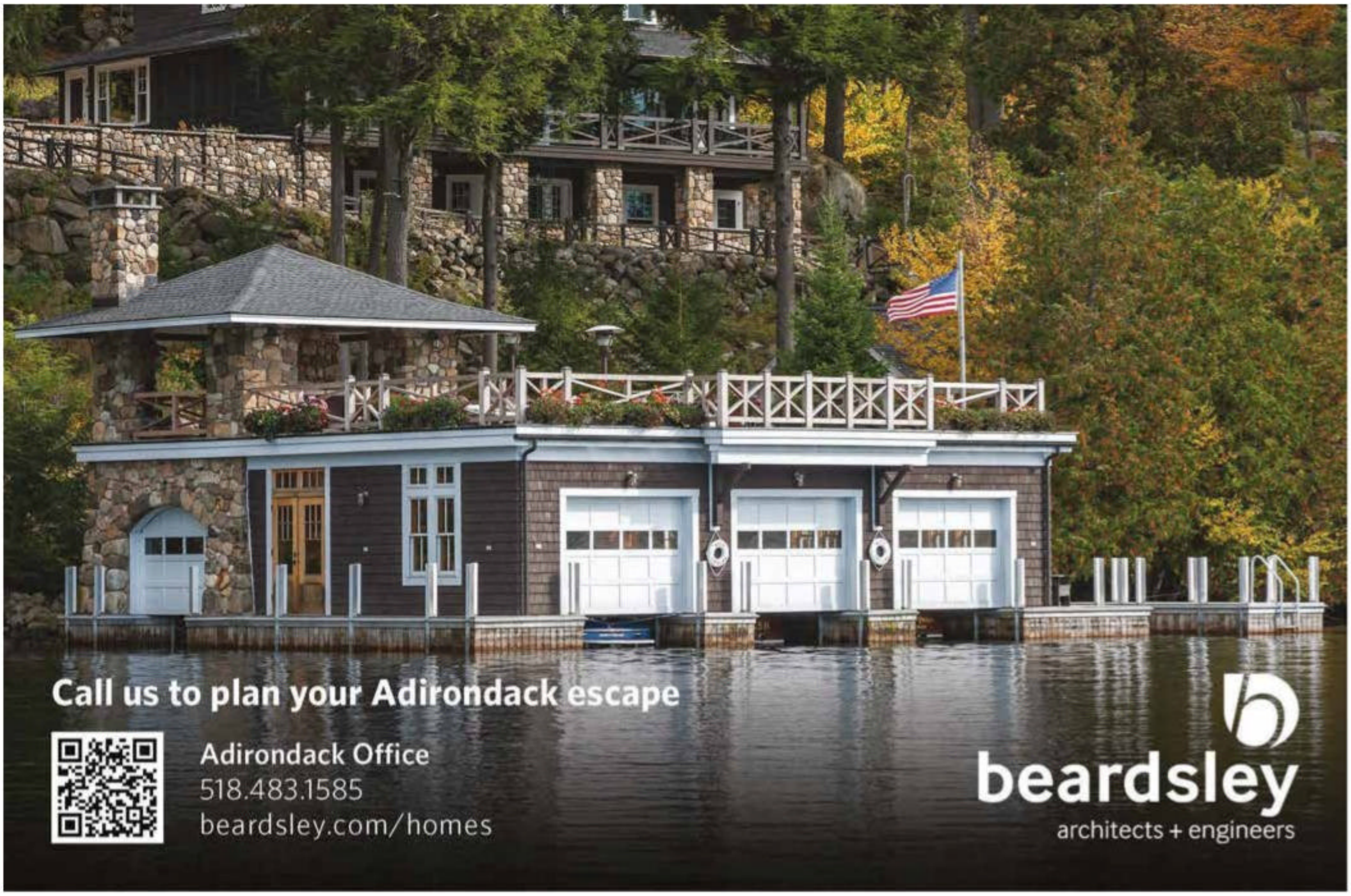
After treating Eurasian watermilfoil with ProcellaCOR at test sites in seven Adirondack lakes last summer—including Lake George, Chateaugay Lake and the Caroga Lakes—the Adirondack Park Agency has announced that the herbicide is effective in killing the invasive, dissipates quickly, and doesn't significantly impact native plants.

Building a Future

An innovative new program at Paul Smith's College will teach students to build their own tiny houses. It's the brainchild of Deb Naybor, an associate professor of environmental studies who led a senior sustainability project last fall in which a half-dozen students built an 8-by-12-foot, fully insulated home. Naybor is now expanding that course into a two-year curriculum, which she sees as a way to help young adults find financial independence in an ever-rising housing market.

Students will cover the material costs—last fall's prototype cost under $3,000—and graduate with a starter home on wheels that can follow them to their first jobs. "I always joke with the parents that if things don't work out and [the students] don't get a job right away, they can move the tiny house into their parents' driveway and live there until they find a good job," Naybor said in a recent interview with *Fast Company*.

MAKER'S SPACE
GORILLA LADDERS
DEWALT



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A Secret Unveiled

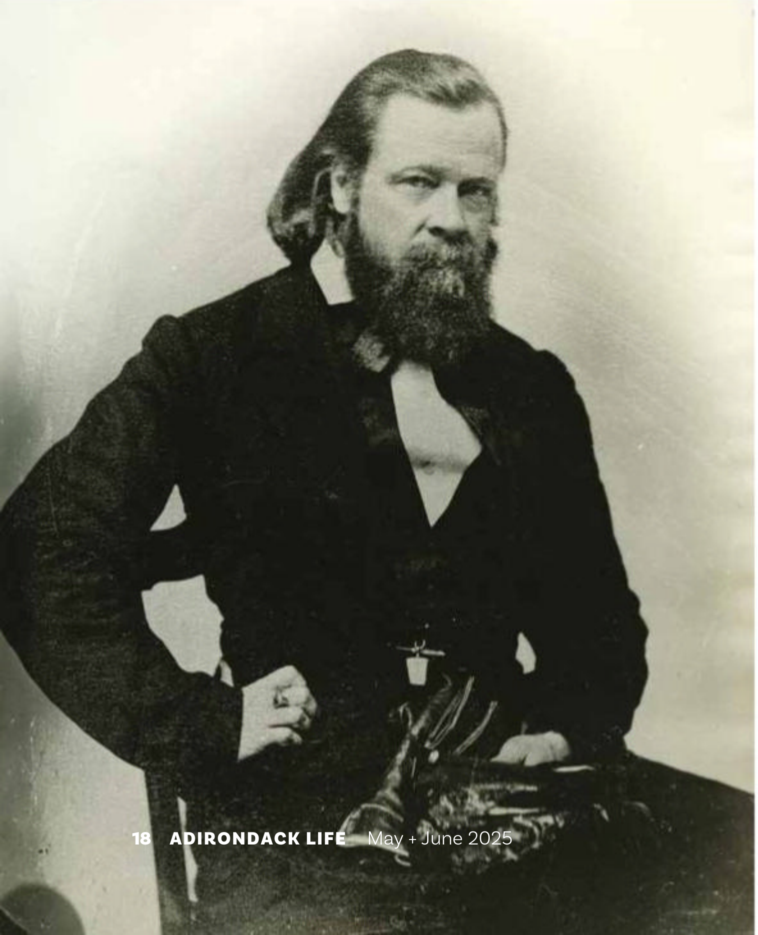
The hidden legacy of pulp-fiction writer Ned Buntline

BY GEORGE PAYNE

Edward Zane Carroll Judson, better known by his pen name Ned Buntline, was one of the most famous—and controversial—figures of 19th-century America. A prolific writer, he played a key role in shaping the mythic narratives of the American West, particularly through his promotion of the legendary "Buffalo Bill" Cody. Buntline's dime novels, a heady mix of adventure, romance and sensationalism, captivated readers across the nation and indelibly shaped the public's imagination of the frontier. A man of stark contradictions, he was celebrated for his literary accomplishments even as his reckless lifestyle, personal scandals and problematic views on race and violence ignited public ire. His reputation was a patchwork of journalism that exposed corruption and scandal alongside a personal life marked by tumultuous marriages, public feuds and criminal entanglements—traits that embodied the complexity of his era.

In a story as sensational as one of his own dime novels, I recently uncovered a long-buried family connection to Ned Buntline. For decades, my family believed that William Payne was the biological father of my great-grandfather, Walter Payne. However, a careful review of historical records, heartfelt conversations with relatives, and undeniable physical resemblances have led me to believe the truth: Walter Payne was, in fact, the son of Ned Buntline.

The evidence is compelling. My great-great-grandmother, Sarah Jane "Sally" Brooks, encountered Buntline in the late 1850s while working as a domestic servant. Renowned for his impulsiveness, multiple marriages and extravagant lifestyle, Buntline allegedly fathered Walter during a brief liaison. Shortly after Walter's birth on June 5, 1861, in Indian Lake, Sarah was abandoned, a



Circa 1870 portrait of the notorious Ned Buntline, who lived in a cabin on Eagle Lake. Buntline, left, with "Buffalo Bill" Cody and "Texas Jack" Omohundro, 1872.

PHOTOGRAPHS FROM ADIRONDACK EXPERIENCE

casualty of Buntline's pattern of scandal and heartbreak.

Sarah eventually married William Payne, who lovingly raised Walter as his own son. Though William provided stability and a family name, the true story of Walter's parentage remained hidden for generations—until now.

My discovery was not the result of a single, definitive document. Instead, it emerged from a series of incremental clues: reading *The Notorious Life of Ned Buntline: A Tale of Murder, Betrayal, and the Creation of Buffalo Bill* by Julia Bricklin, where she argued that Brooks had been linked to Buntline and that Walter was his biological son; poring over family records on FindAGrave.com, which connected Sarah and Walter to the era and locale of Buntline's exploits; and, crucially, comparing photographs of my great-grandfather, father, uncle and Buntline. The resemblances were uncanny—my Uncle Bill's features, in particular, echoed those of Buntline so strikingly that it seemed impossible to dismiss them as mere coincidence. The visual evidence, as they say, does not lie.

This discovery has reshaped my understanding of both my identity and my heritage. I now recognize why writing comes so naturally to me, why I possess an insatiable curiosity about history and travel, and why storytelling feels like second nature. Even my less flattering traits—impulsiveness, restlessness and occasional meanness—seem rooted in something deeper and inherited. My father, too, has observed certain habits and proclivities in himself that he once couldn't explain, but now, in light of this revelation, resonate differently.

Yet, as I embrace this newfound connection, I also grapple with the troubling aspects of Buntline's life. As a cultural figure, he shaped the mythic landscape of the American West with undeniable talent, charm and charisma. But he was also a racist, a murderer, an instigator of violence and a hypocrite—a gambler and a womanizer who left a trail of destruction.

The most painful part of his legacy is intertwined with my family's own story. Sarah Jane Brooks was only 16 when

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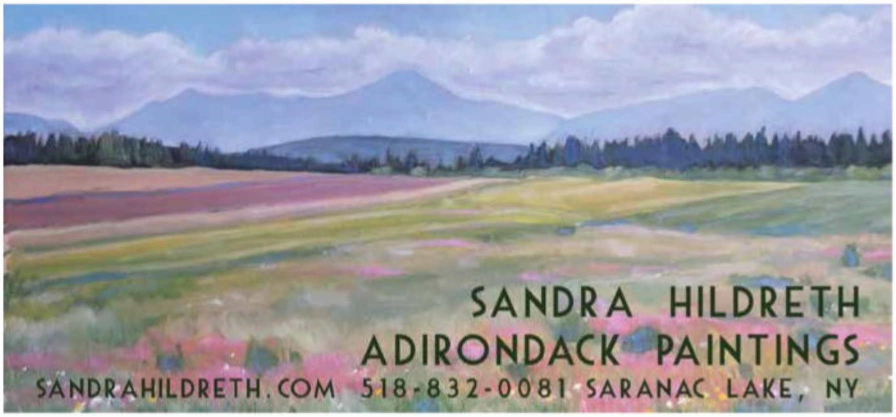
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Buntline allegedly impregnated her, a stark reminder of the exploitative power imbalance between a teenage domestic servant and an older, notorious man. It is deeply unsettling to consider that my great-great-grandmother may have been a victim of abuse.

Despite the circumstances of his birth, Walter Payne grew up to lead a quiet, respectable life. He married, raised a family, and lived out his days in the Adirondacks. Walter passed away on June 15, 1933, and was laid to rest in Cedar River Cemetery in Indian Lake alongside the Payne family. Although he carried the Payne name, the revelation of his biological connection to Buntline adds a profound and complex layer to our family history.

Unsurprisingly, this revelation has sparked mixed reactions within my family. Some dismiss it as irrelevant, insisting that the father who raised Walter—William Payne—is the true measure of fatherhood, defined not by biology but by presence and care. Others find the connection too scandalous to accept. For me, however, the evidence is undeniable and significant. Although Buntline was not a father in the traditional sense, his link to my family is an integral part of our story.

Ned Buntline died on July 16, 1886, in Stamford, New York, yet his legacy looms large. In the wake of this discovery, my curiosity has shifted from the grand, scandalous tales of a bygone celebrity to the intimate, untold stories of my immediate family. The lives of Walter Payne, his son George Payne, and Sarah Jane Brooks now captivate me far more than the notorious exploits of a literary figure.

As I delve deeper into their histories, I am learning that the true inheritance is not found in the sensational scandals of a larger-than-life persona, but in the quiet, everyday choices and sacrifices that defined our family. In understanding their lives, I am beginning to understand myself. The true power of this discovery lies not in the past, but in the present connections it reveals. It is within these intimate stories that I find the roots of my own identity.

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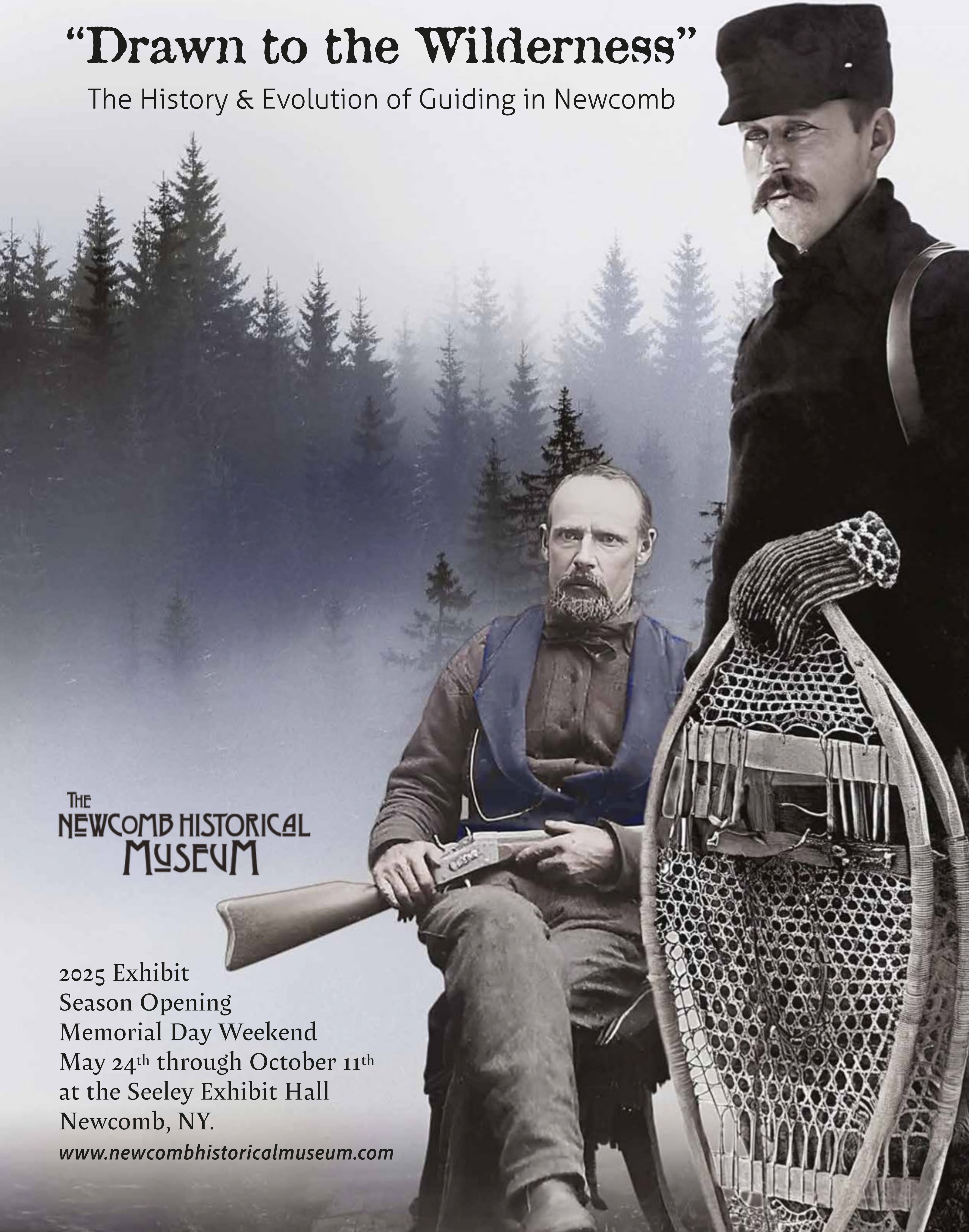

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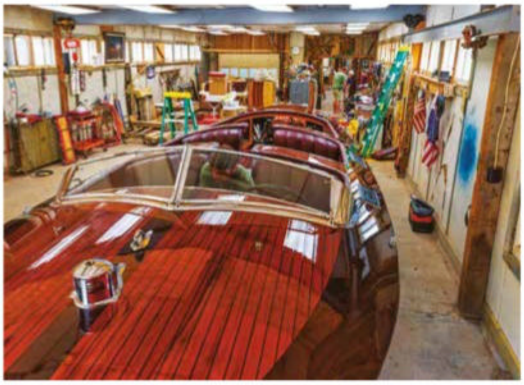
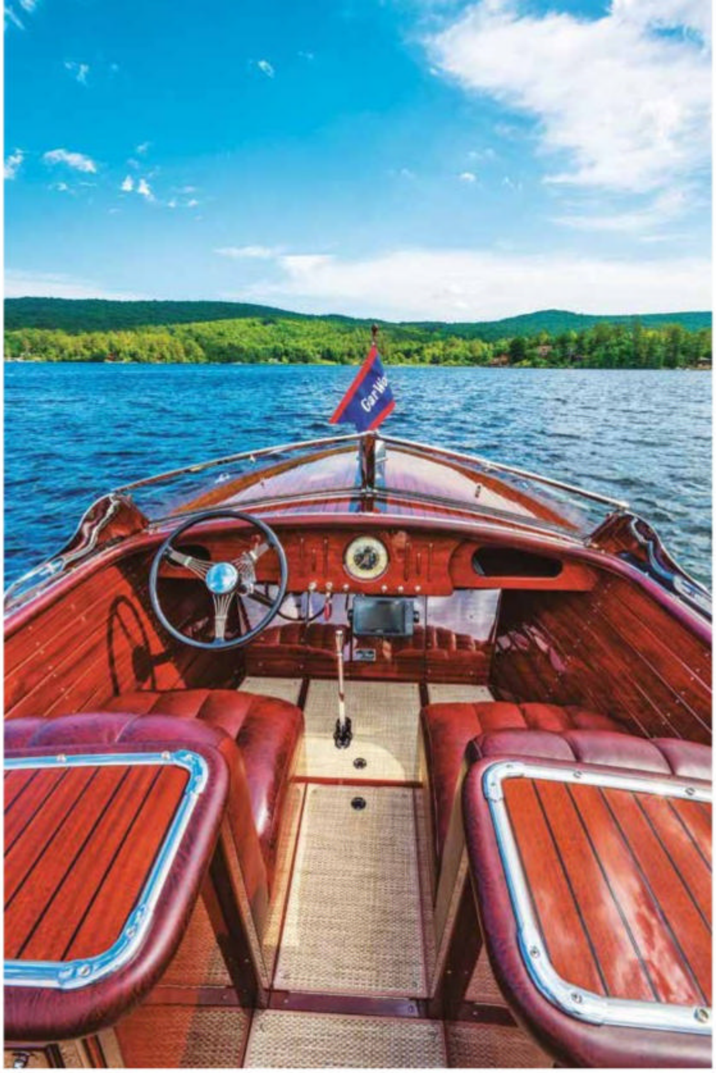




Dream Boats

Crafting custom Gar Woods in Brant Lake

BY TONY HALL

The Turcottes' mahogany Gar Woods are in high demand—the wait-list to buy one can be four to five years long.

Every year, two of the finest wooden boats built in America emerge from an unassuming World War II–era hangar in the southern Adirondack hamlet of Brant Lake.

The boats are Gar Woods, descendants of the gentleman's runabouts produced by the renowned speedboat racer and designer Garfield Arthur Wood, of Marysville, Michigan, in the 1930s.

"Gar Woods were top of the line, and because of their superior quality, the most costly," says Mike Turcotte, who with his brother Tom runs the business started by his father and uncle in 1969.

The Turcottes' mahogany Gar Woods replicate the quality as well as the lines of the elegant originals, which explains why the shop's small crew limits itself to producing two new boats a year, and why each one is so expensive. A new, custom-made Gar Wood starts at $350,000, and the waiting list to purchase one is now four to five years long.

"The difference between our boats and the originals is undetectable, except for the fact that ours are powered by modern marine engines, because the original design is so amazing," Mike says. "You're driving down a lake at 30 miles an hour and no one is getting wet or, if you hit a wave or another boat's wake, getting pounded."

"When you place an original 28-foot Gar Wood next to one of ours, you won't see any difference. They're the same boat," Larry Turcotte, Mike's uncle, says. They are, he adds in his habitually understated way, "nice-riding boats."

The advantage of a contemporary Gar Wood, Mike says, is that "you don't have to tinker with it to get it ready for the family. You just go boating."

Larry and his brother, Tom Turcotte Sr., didn't intend to go into the

PHOTOGRAPHS BY CARL HEILMAN II

boat-building business when they were restoring Gar Woods in a garage in Cohoes. Tom had a degree in hotel management from Cornell and was running a hotel near the Albany airport, while Larry, with degrees from SUNY Oswego and the College of Saint Rose, in Albany, was teaching industrial arts.

"It was a hobby that got out of hand," Mike says—a hobby that began when Larry and Tom were teenagers, with a 1947 Gar Wood they restored after persuading a neighbor to part with it. Restoring vintage boats enabled the Turcottes to refine their knowledge and skills; by 1988, they were building their own Gar Woods, trailering them to boat shows and attracting customers by offering rides to anyone who showed the slightest interest or curiosity.

"Selling a boat that you haven't built yet isn't easy—the boat shows enabled us to demonstrate how our boats would perform and run once they were in the water," Larry says.

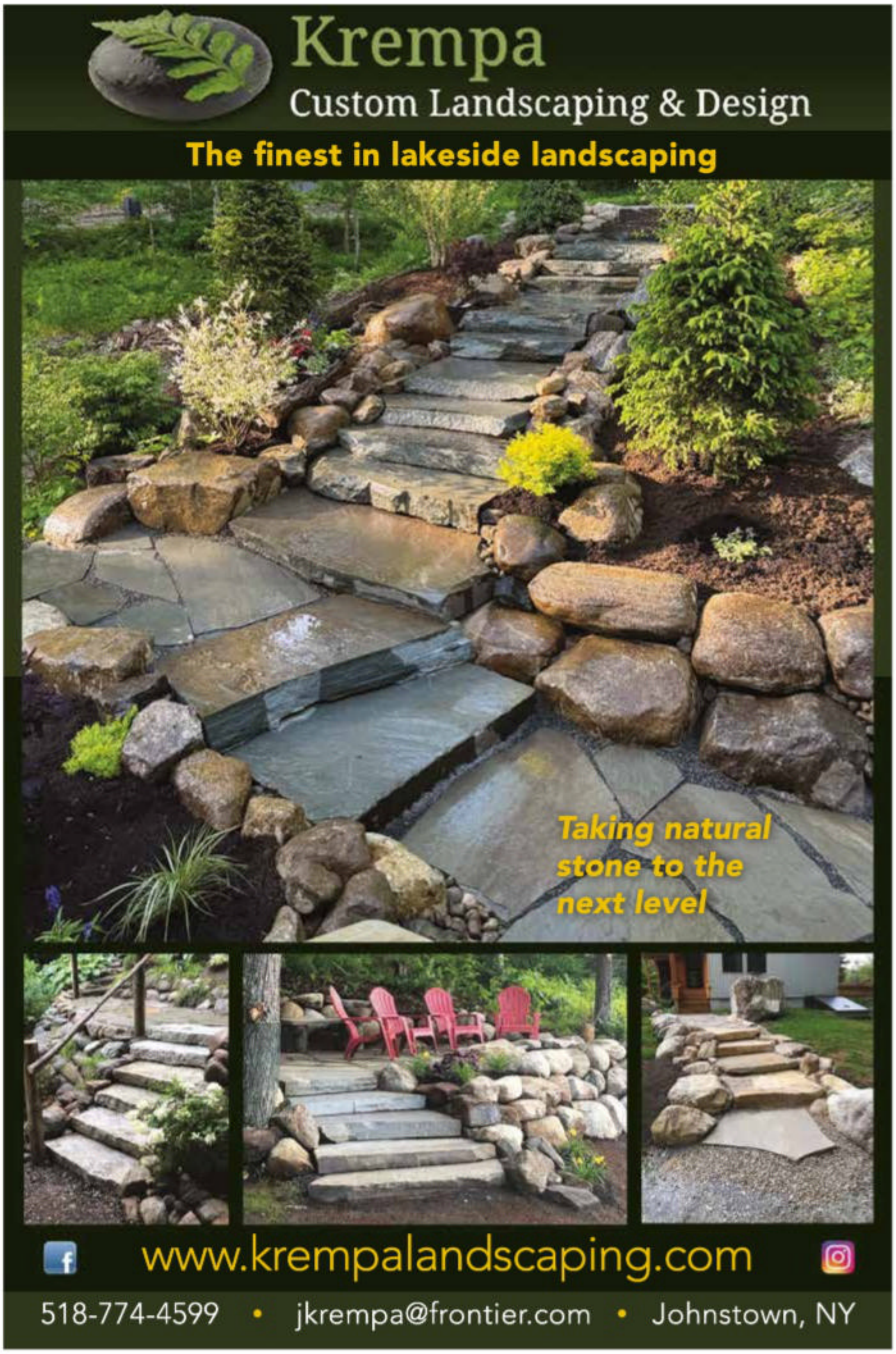
As builders of contemporary wooden boats, they faced a certain amount of skepticism from purists who believed that only the originals were worthy of names such as Hacker, Chris-Craft and Gar Wood, concedes Tom Sr.

"There was some resistance to what we were offering," he says. "But that's changed over the years."

By the mid-1990s, when Tom Sr. and Larry moved their operations to Brant Lake, where the family had spent their summers, "they were restoring and building a lot of boats," Mike says.

"The Turcottes have always been interested in maintaining the historical integrity of the boats they designed and built. They never messed around. They just started putting out beautiful stuff, surpassing their mentors—the boat-builders who came before them," says Roger Johnson, a longtime official of the Antique and Classic Boat Society and a former professional boat restorer himself.

Dan Rogosich, a Lake George summer resident who commissioned a customized, 28-foot Gar Wood Streamliner from the Turcottes in 2017, remembers admiring wooden boats on the lake as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a kid. "Just watching them come down the lake was awesome. I dreamed that one day I would be lucky enough to own one. So, literally, the Turcottes built my dream," he says.

A year at Gar Wood Custom Boats has its own rhythms and passes according to a reassuring, prescribed routine.

This year's two boats will have been framed, planked and sanded by the end of January, to be followed by applications of stain and the first of 16 coats of varnish. One boat is out the door by Father's Day, the second by the Fourth of July.

"Everybody's got a job and they just do it. Everyone is cross-trained, but everyone has a niche. It's a system, and it's only gotten more efficient over the years," Larry says.

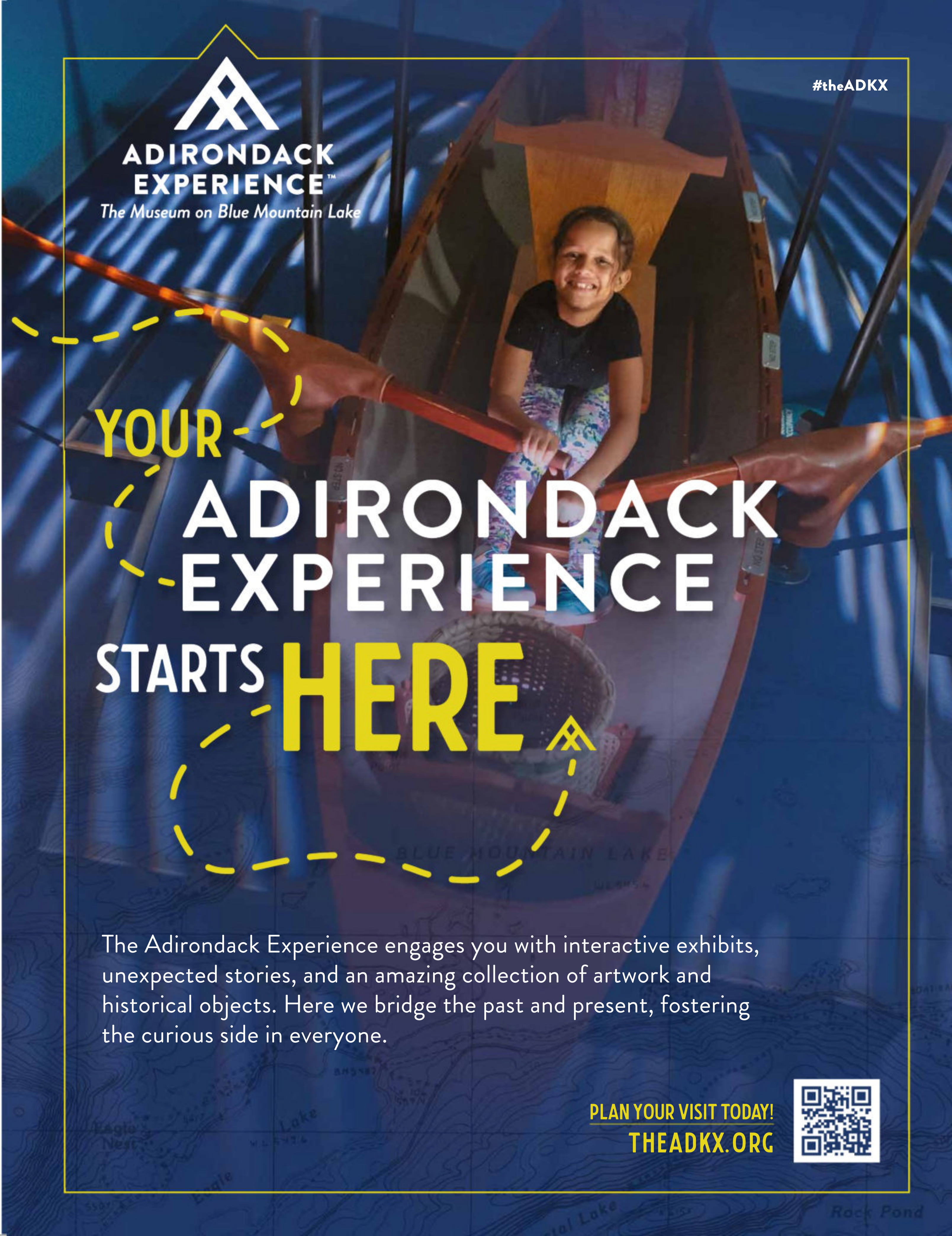
> **"The difference between our boats and the originals is undetectable, except for the fact that ours are powered by modern marine engines," Mike Turcotte says.**

The Turcottes also commit to at least one major restoration a year. When I visited the shop on a late-fall morning, they were in the process of restoring a 1927, 26-foot Baby Gar Junior that was part of the fleet of small craft that gathered to evacuate British and French soldiers from Dunkirk in 1940. The boat is now owned by a Connecticut family, who brought it to the Turcottes.

Boat-building is a way of life, not just a livelihood—one that leaves the Turcottes ample time for their families, hunting camp, snowmobiling and locals' night at Jimbo's Club, in Brant Lake.

"We try not to work weekends, but as deadlines approach, that's not always possible, and sometimes you just can't stop yourself from tinkering with something," Mike says.

"Boat-building enables us to live in the Adirondacks, a place where the economy is seasonal at best," says Tom



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Sr. "To be able to operate a full-time, year-round business as a family—that is a fabulous thing."

Although rooted in the southern Adirondacks, with employees living no farther than Minerva, Gar Wood Custom Boats isn't limited in its reach. The Turcottes' boats can be found on lakes throughout the Adirondacks, as well as in the Thousand Islands, Finger Lakes, New Hampshire, Pennsylvania, Florida and California. Many of them return to Brant Lake to be refinished or restored.

Maintaining the boats they build not only provides the Turcottes with another revenue stream, it also sustains relationships with customers and enables them to revisit their work and weigh improvements that they might not have contemplated otherwise.

Today's renewed appreciation for wooden boats might easily have been eclipsed by a preference for the ease and convenience of fiberglass boats. The Turcottes have helped sustain that appreciation while keeping the art and craft of wooden boat construction alive, at least for one more generation—but perhaps more. The two sons of Tom Jr. now spend as much time in the shop with him as he and his brothers did with their father when they were growing up.

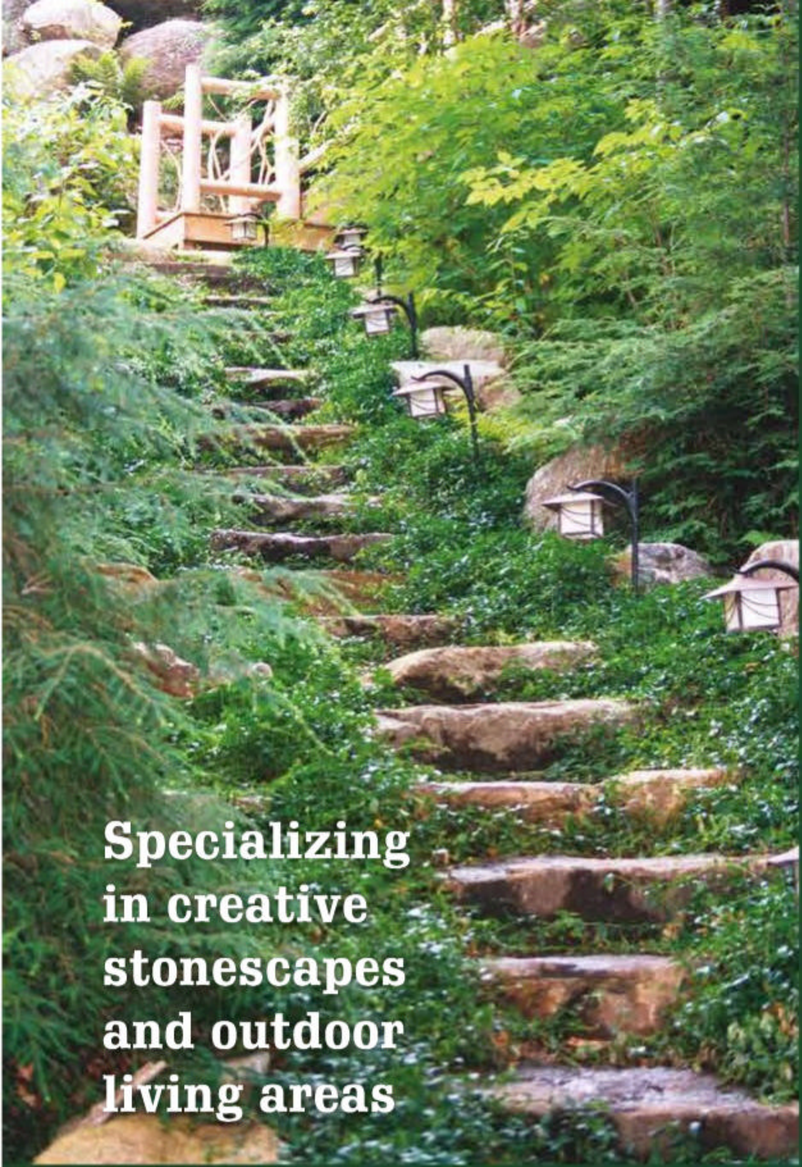
"It's a craft that could easily be lost, because it's not an easy business," says Tom Sr. "But as long as there's a customer base that can afford these boats, the builders will be there." ▲

The Turcottes and their Gar Woods will be at the Antique and Classic Boat Society's Lake George Antique & Classic Boat Show Rendezvous (acbs-adc.org) at the village docks on August 22–23.

See vintage Gar Woods at Saranac Lake's Runabout Rendezvous (spencerboatworks.wordpress.com), a showcase of antique wooden motorboats and handmade guideboats happening at Riverside Park on July 5.

And the Antique and Classic Boat Society celebrates its 50th Vintage Boat Week at the Antique Boat Museum (www.abm.org), in Clayton, on September 15–21.

Tony Hall has been the editor and publisher of the* Lake George Mirror *for 27 years.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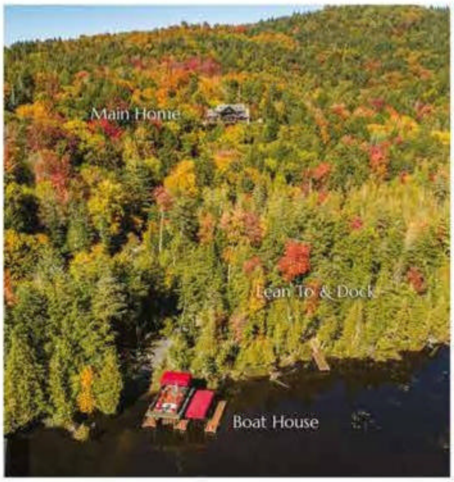

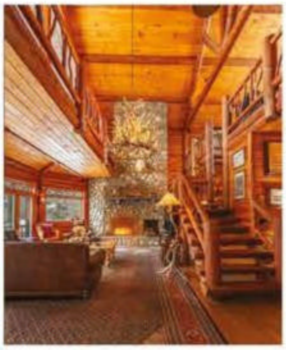

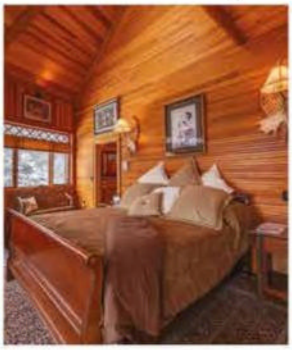

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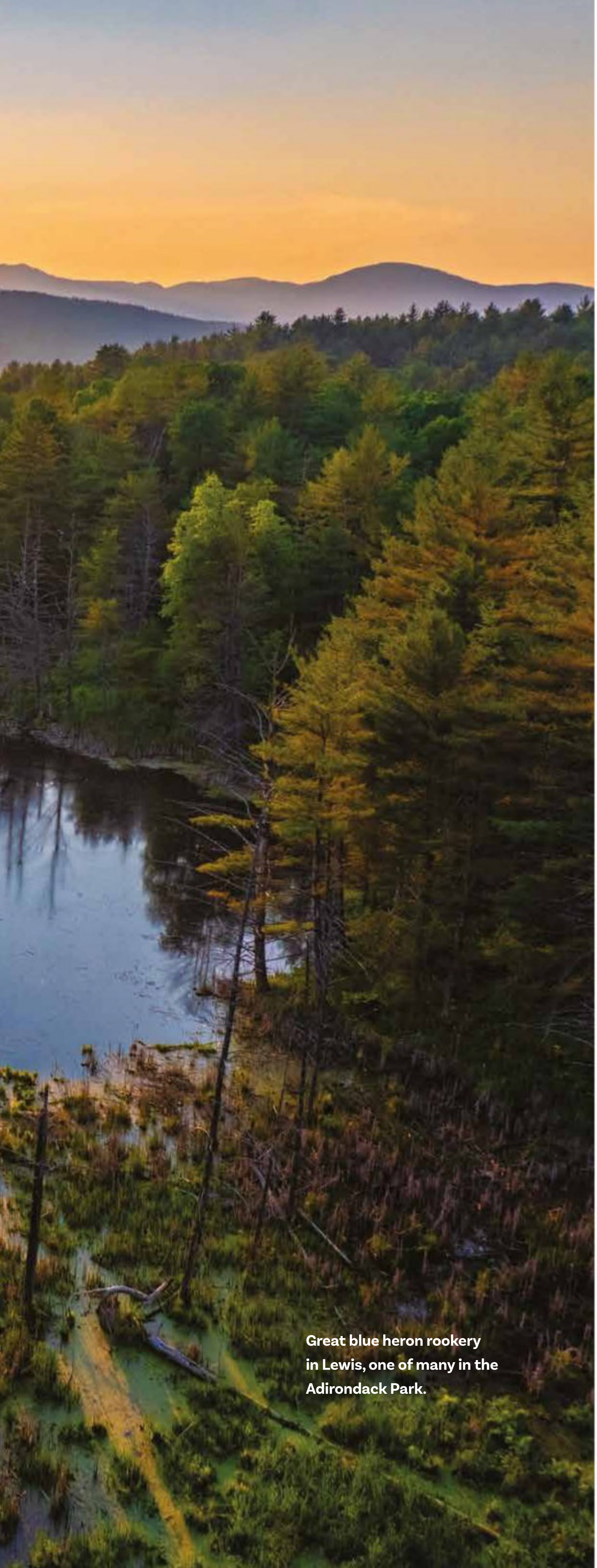
WHERE HERONS GATHER

Sometimes solitary predators like a little togetherness

BY JAMES GORMAN



Great blue heron rookery in Lewis, one of many in the Adirondack Park.

W

WE USED TO SEE A GREAT BLUE HERON now and then around the stream that runs near our cabin. After Tropical Storm Irene hit the Northeast in 2011, the bird seemed to have decided there were better hunting grounds. No surprise. Not only did Irene wash away three houses downstream from us, it ravaged and remade the streambed, silting up some fishing pools and eliminating others.

Then, the summer before last, we saw a heron again. And last summer we spotted one several times. I take it as a sign that the stream is recovering and the fish population growing. I don't really believe Nature cares about me one way or another, but great blue herons do feel like an extravagant gift to all bird lovers.

They can grow to four feet tall with as much as a seven-foot wingspan. They are predators as fierce as leopards, but you don't need to book a safari to see them. Every pond, marsh, river and lake shore is home to herons that you can watch stalk, stab and swallow fish, frogs and whatever else catches their attention. They will eat, or try to eat, amphibians, reptiles, small mammals and other birds as big as grebes, a duck-sized water bird. Chris Elphick, an ornithologist and conservation biologist at the University of Connecticut, said, "if they can grab it and get it in their mouth, they'll eat it."

The birds are usually solo hunters, but they gather in numbers in winter when California rice farmers flood their fields. Mice and rats flee the water, while blackbirds come to eat rice grains that float to the surface. "You just get this big convergence of blackbirds feeding on the grain and herons grabbing rats and grabbing

Great blues can grow four feet tall with as much as a seven-foot wingspan. The birds usually hunt alone but like to nest together in rookeries. One of the largest in the state is on Valcour Island, in Lake Champlain.

PAGES 30–31 AND HERON AND CHICK NEST PHOTOGRAPHS BY JOHNATHAN ESPER. PAGE 32 PHOTOGRAPH BY JEFF NADLER. LONE HERON (PAGE 33) AND CHICKS (PAGES 34–35) BY PAM UNDERHILL KARAZ

mice," Elphick said. "And if a black bird that's feeding on the grain gets too close, they'll grab a black bird and they'll just choke it down." Quite a surprise for the watcher, not to mention the blackbird.

Sometimes, however, they overdo it. A 1989 report described two dead herons that had tried to swallow Pacific lampreys. They apparently got stuck on the way down. In 1938 a naturalist reported finding the entangled bodies of a great blue heron and a nearly four-foot-long water snake. He wrote, "the snake in its struggle to escape, made a complete halfhitch around the bird's neck and a coil entirely around the right wing. This action resulted in so kinking the bird's neck as to break it and at the same time forced the bird's bill through the head of the snake." It's a tale worthy of mythology.

Even though they hunt alone, great blues like togetherness in nesting. In the U.S., ornithologists call these nesting colonies rookeries, and they can have just a few nests, or hundreds. In past years surveys have counted nearly 500 such rookeries in New York. One of the largest, with nests in the hundreds, is in the Adirondack Park, on Lake Champlain's Valcour Island.

Smaller rookeries are numerous. In Lewis, one of the more picturesque rookeries, with about a dozen nests, rises high above a swampy bulge in Phelps Brook. Looking to the west from Route 9 just north of Elizabethtown, the nests appear etched against the skyline of the Jay Mountain Wilderness Area and the Sentinel Range. About that word, "rookery," though. Elphick points out that in his native England, only rooks have rookeries. Herons nest in heronries.

You would think that so many giant birds with pick-ax beaks would discourage predators. And herons can certainly be aggressive. But a rookery also offers a smorgasbord of eggs or chicks that some predators can't resist. Julie Hart, project coordinator for the New York Breeding Bird Atlas III, a citizen science project now working to produce its third report, said, "I've seen a raccoon climb up into the middle of the rookery, and it will go around and start eating the eggs, and the herons don't attack it. They just kind of stand off to the side and squawk. It's pretty disturbing." Sometimes bigger predators

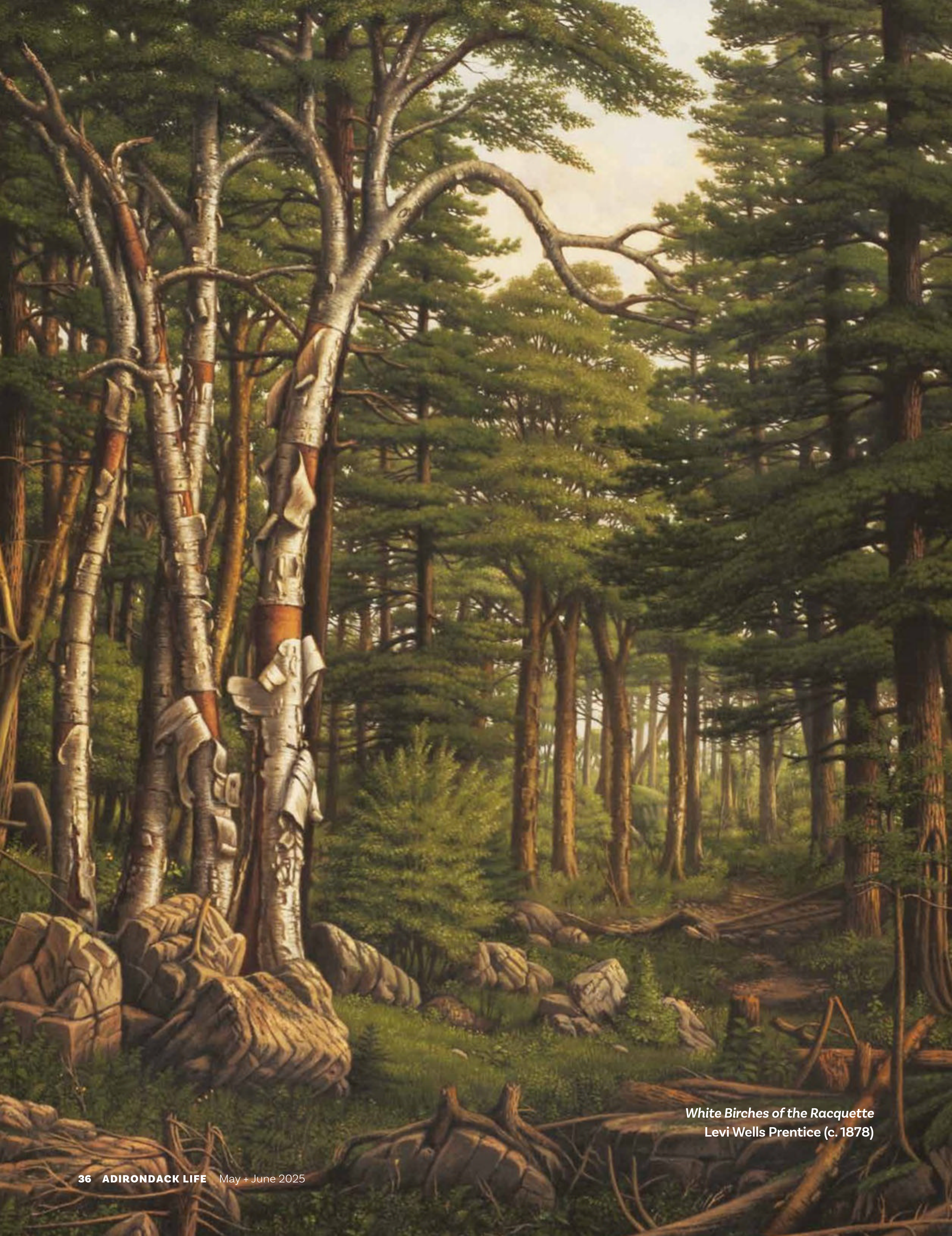
climb the tall trees to heron nests. *USA Today* took note of the sighting of a bear in a heron rookery a few years ago. Yes, there are photos.

Rookeries offer a less brutal buffet for bird lovers, the chance to see mating displays and chicks. In the spring, as early as March in some areas, herons return to their rookery and start their version of Tinder, which involves some spectacular courtship dances. Pick a rookery to watch, Hart said, and "start keeping an eye out for those first herons to come back." They don't pair off for life, but they do stick together for the season to raise the chicks. "You can watch them throughout the summer, and see them bringing sticks to the nest, sitting on their eggs and then feeding the young."

The third breeding bird atlas is still being compiled and at press time Hart didn't have information on whether there had been any significant population changes in New York, but she said that recent government reports for the U.S. and Canada show that waterfowl and waterbirds are an exception to a general decline in bird populations, probably because of decades-long work on conserving wetlands. Some waterbirds are also moving north because of climate change.

This spring I'm looking forward to the return of the heron, and the herons. We aren't far from Lewis, and I plan to check regularly on how those nests are doing. I doubt that I can tell one heron from another, but I might try. It would be a thrill to see young heron chicks growing on fish from the stream I see every day. ▲

James Gorman, a former reporter and editor at *The New York Times*, is the author of seven books, on subjects ranging from dinosaurs to penguins to the oddly humorous aspects of science, medicine and technology.

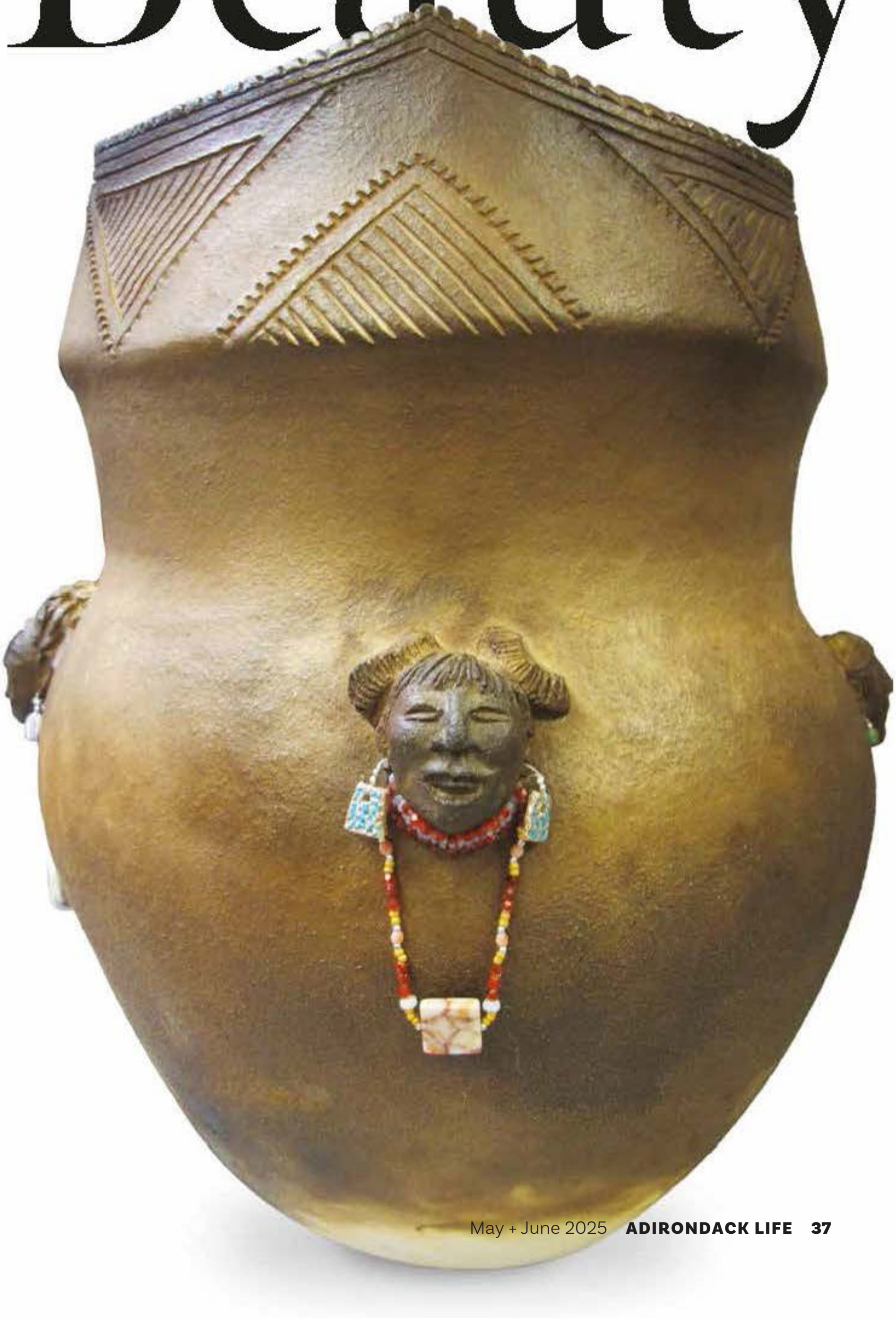


White Birches of the Racquette
Levi Wells Prentice (c. 1878)

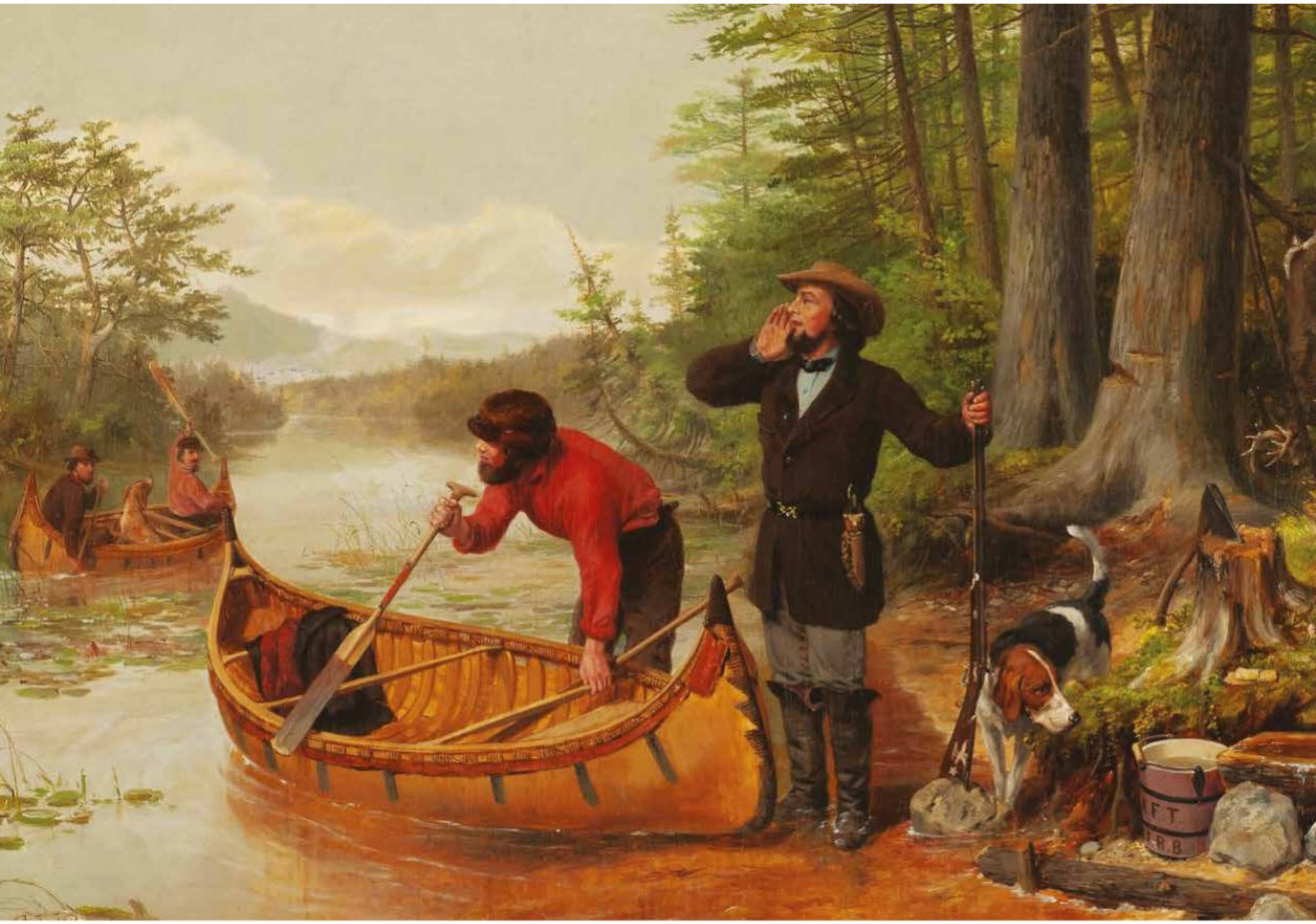
Natural Beauty

The Adirondack Experience's imaginative new *Artists & Inspiration in the Wild* exhibit

by Niki Kourofsky



East Coast to West Coast Survivors
Natasha Smoke Santiago **(2021)**



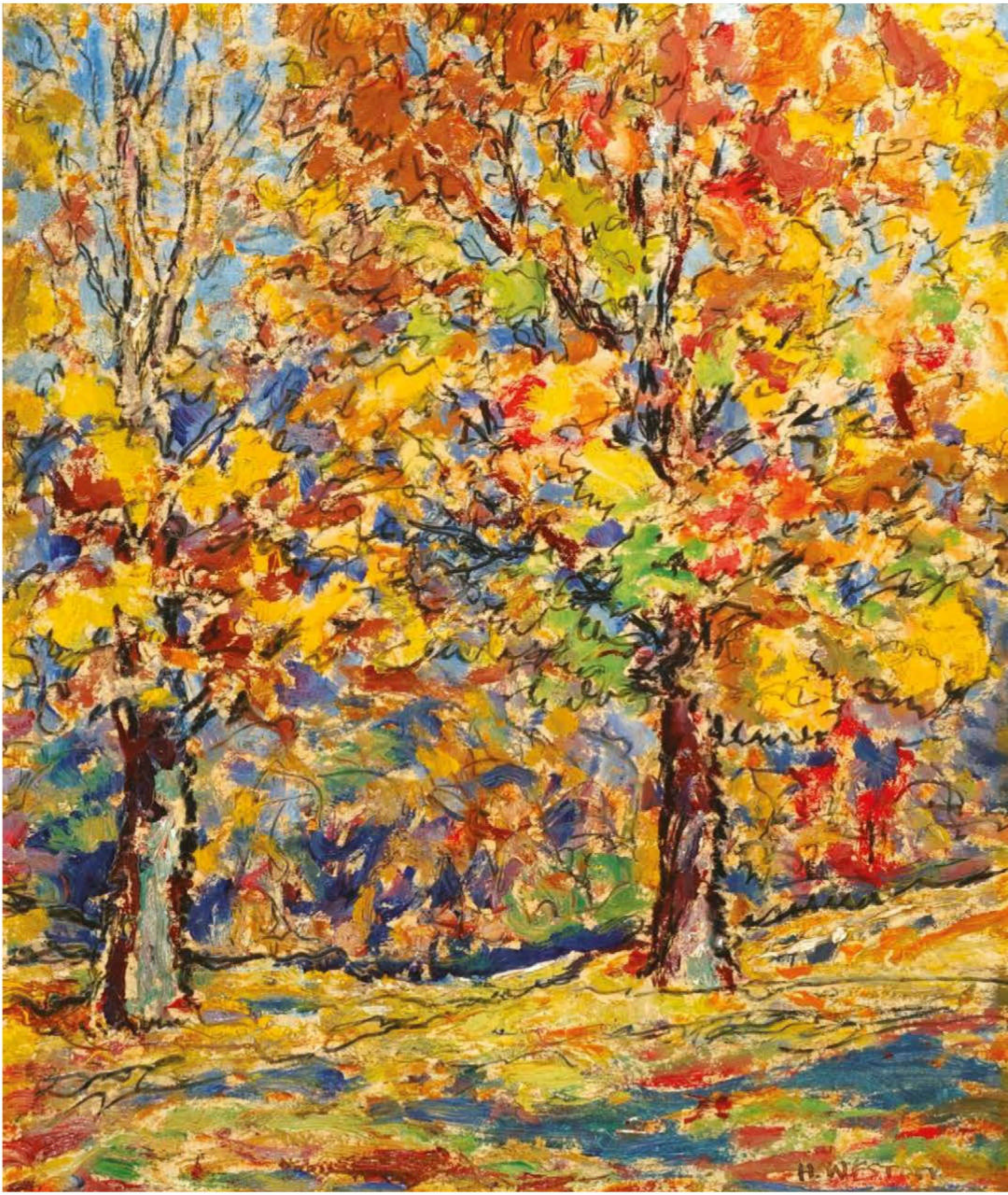
Going Out: Deer Hunting in the Adirondacks, Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait (1862)

"Oh, it's just art." That's a comment Laura Rice, chief curator of Blue Mountain Lake's Adirondack Experience, once overheard a woman exclaim as she walked into a gallery, took a quick look around and just as quickly retreated.

It was a reaction that stuck with Rice, and a script she wanted to flip.

"People know this is a history museum," Rice says, "but they don't always think of it as an art museum. How do you engage people who think [Adirondack art] is just a bunch of flat things?"

The answer is *Artists & Inspiration in the Wild*, an exhibit that opened in 2023 after six years of planning. The show features about 250 works scattered through five galleries—an introductory space, followed by rooms dedicated to light, forest, water



Sugar Maples, September, Harold Weston (c. 1920)

ALL IMAGES COURTESY OF THE ADIRONDACK EXPERIENCE and mountains—that dig into the natural world's impact on a diverse set of artists.

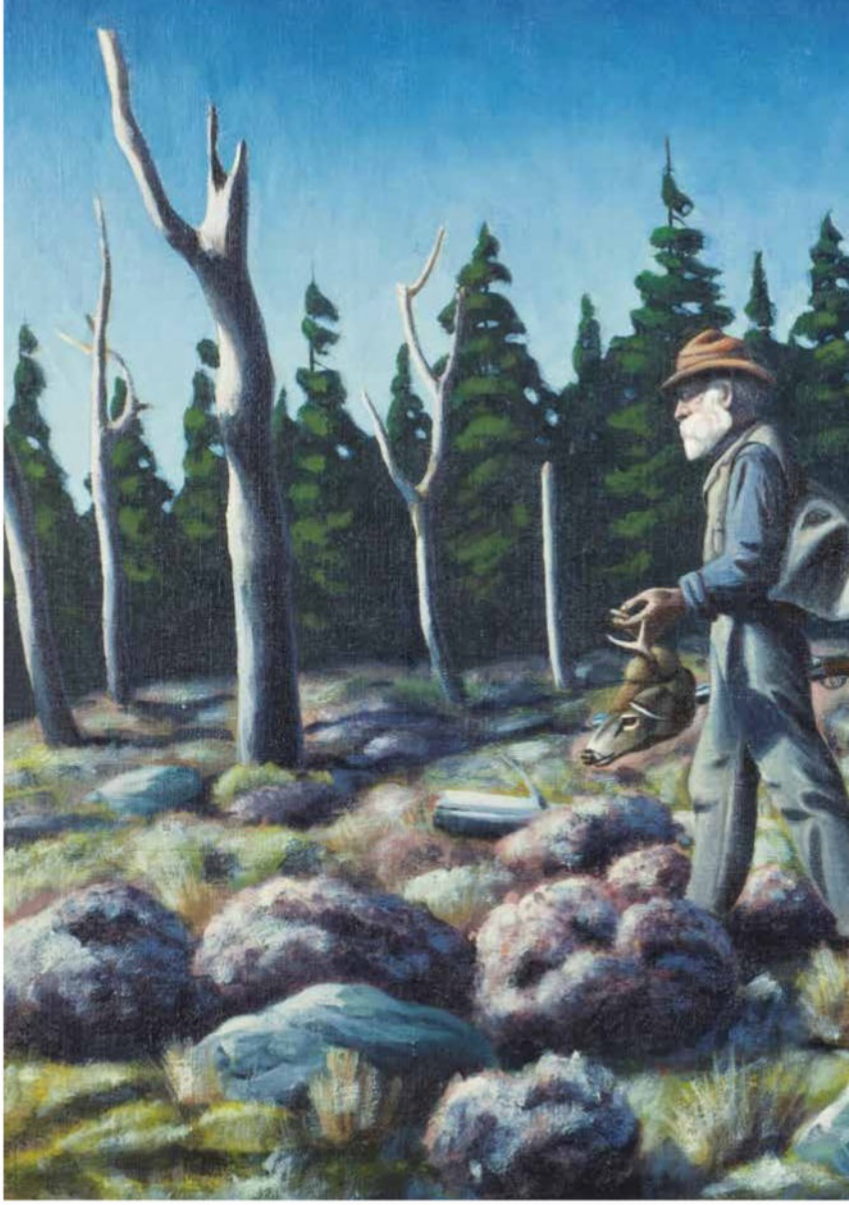
Arranging the works in unexpected combinations, rather than displaying them chronologically or by medium, shakes up the narrative without disturbing the roots of the exhibit, each artist's unique response to the region.

There's plenty here for traditionalists: Rockwell Kent's fluffy clouds, Harold Weston's lively palettes, Edna West Teall's folksy scenes, Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait's idealized sporting parties. But there are also now-for-something-completely-different moments, such as Ellen Phelan's mashup of photography and oil painting, Betsy Stewart's exploration of water at a molecular level, or wood artist Tyler Schrader's *Cosmic Portal*—a nine-foot-high sculpture of layered oak, maple, ash and poplar, studded with LED lights, that uses color, vibration and sound to translate the natural electrical impulses of plants.

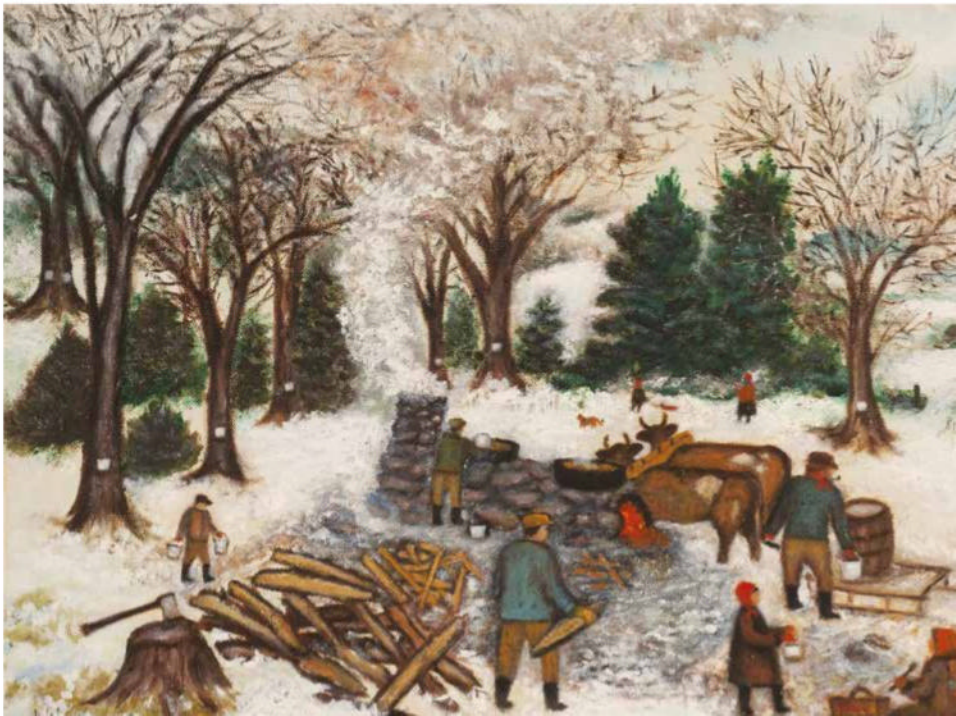
"With artists of today, there's that same connection to the landscape," says Rice. "But they're bringing it into the future."

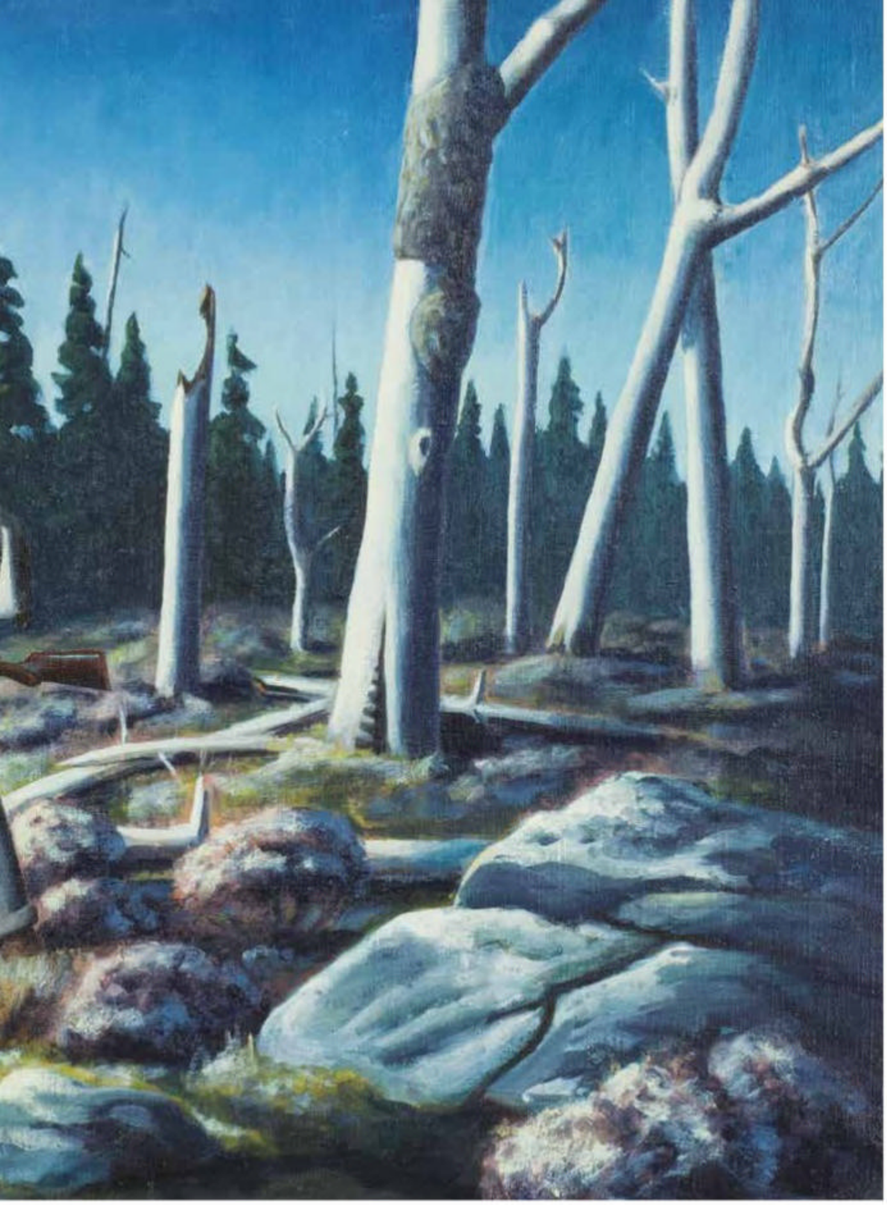
It's clear at first glance that this exhibit is anything but flat. In the opening gallery, furniture-maker Johnathan Sweet's modern take on the Adirondack chair shares space with a pair of beaded boots by Akwesasne Mohawk artist Anna Thompson and an | *Continued on page 60*

Mixing the works into unexpected combinations shakes up the narrative without disturbing the exhibit's roots.

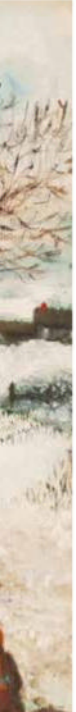


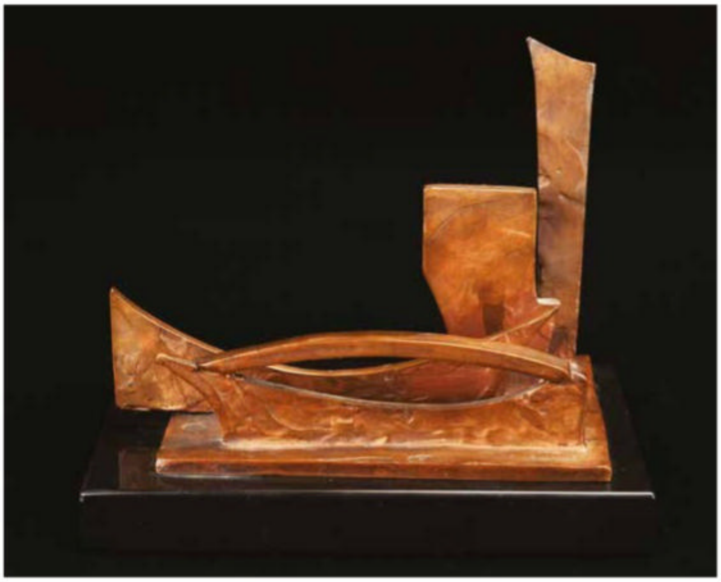
Making Maple Syrup, **Edna West Teall (c. 1960)**



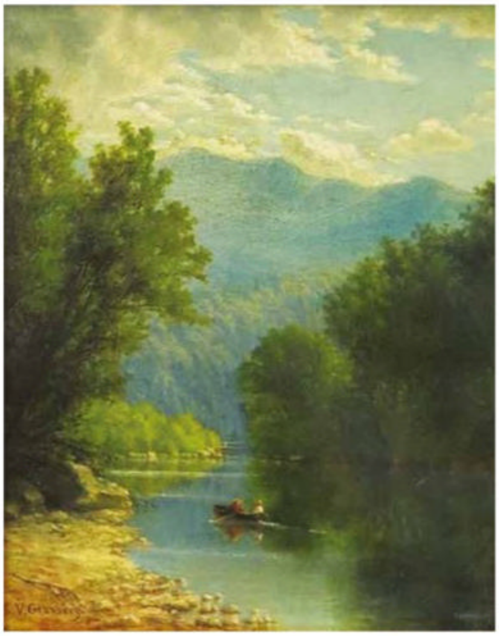


Old Rube, Portrait of Reuben Cary, **Courtenay Brandreth (c. 1945)**





Bolton Landscape, **Dorothy Dehner (1976)**



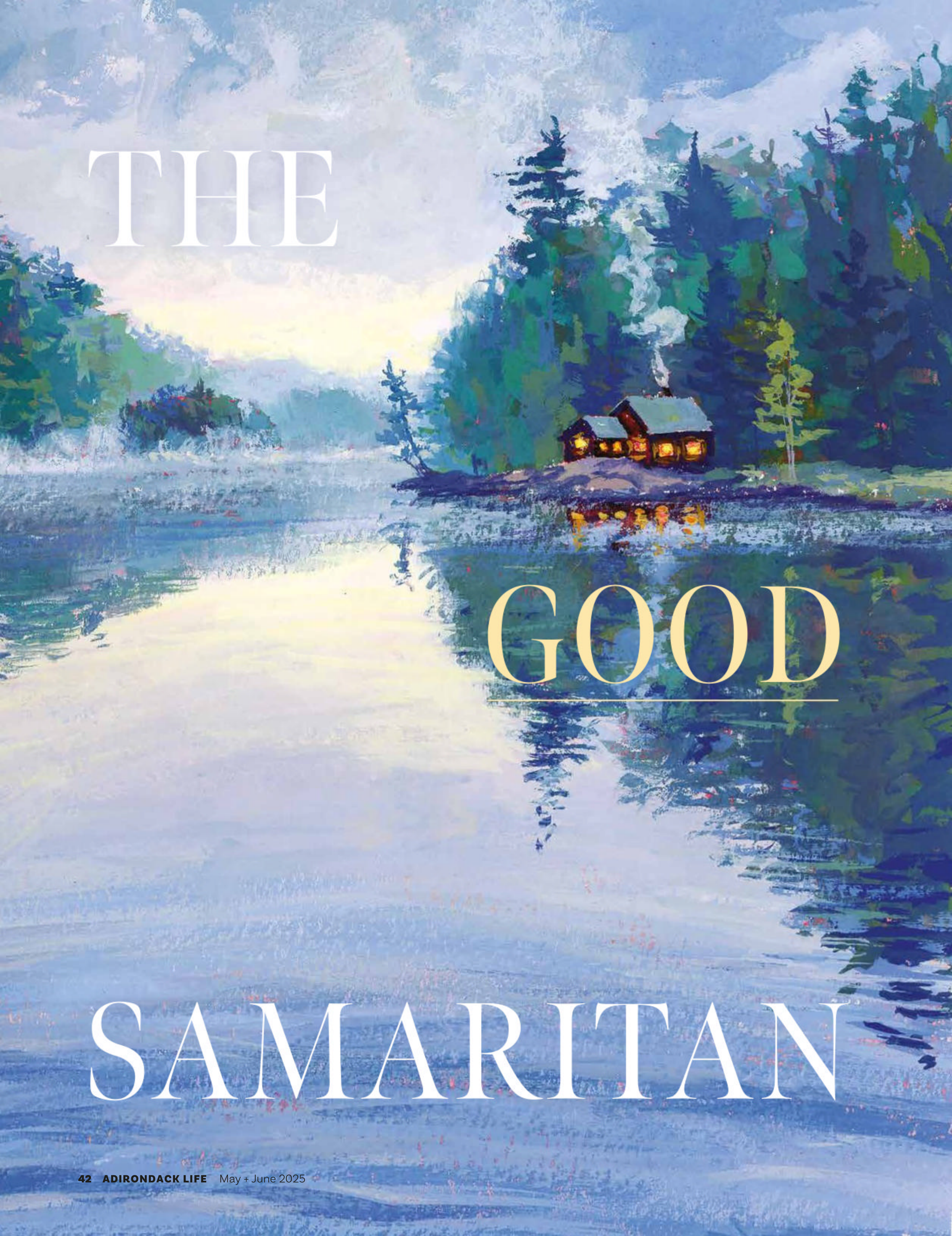
Women's Work

Nineteenth-century female landscape artists working in the Adirondacks may not have made as big a splash as their male counterparts—but they were out there getting their hands (and boots) just as dirty.

The above oil painting, *Untitled: Ausable River*, is a late-century work by Virginia Granbery (1831–1921), who studied at the National Academy of Design, in New York City, and taught art at the Packer Collegiate Institute, in Brooklyn.

Granbery is one of four female artists from that era featured in *Artists & Inspiration in the Wild*, though chief curator Laura Rice says the goal is to expand those numbers, as well as those of other under-represented groups.

"We're making sure that we have a broad spectrum of artists—male, female, people of color, artists from different time periods, in different media, and those who've worked in different parts of the park," Rice says. "The diversity of artistic expression across time and places in the Adirondacks is impressive, and the collection needs to reflect that."



THE GOOD SAMARITAN

Calamity and unexpected kindness along Middle Saranac Lake

HIKE ENOUGH TRAILS, paddle enough lakes and something bad will happen. You'll twist an ankle, get lost, capsize, wonder why you didn't bring the crampons when the ice came earlier than was forecast. Murphy's Law operates in the Adirondacks, and things go wrong. But there is, too, the kindness of strangers.

My first calamity occurred in August 1970. Four of us had rented two canoes for the Old Forge/Saranac Lake route through the Fulton Chain and Raquette and Long Lakes. My three companions were from downstate suburbs, and I drove from Plattsburgh. The plan was to meet in Old Forge, paddle to Saranac Lake, leave the canoes for the outfitter and then hitchhike back to Old Forge and our cars. I was by far the most experienced canoeist. That means I had been in a canoe before. My companions might have watched the movie *Drums along the Mohawk* or looked at some Frederick Remington paintings.

But our inexperience didn't dampen our appreciation of the beauty we traveled through. There were hints of colors that would explode in the months ahead, loons and herons that kept their eyes on us, beavers that slapped warnings, deer that jumped back into the forest, campfires and, oh, so many stars.

And the weather was fine until our last night, our fifth in the woods. We had no tent and the lean-tos were full, so we slept under the stars on the shore of Middle Saranac Lake. Sometime after midnight the stars were gone, the rain started and didn't stop. About five a.m. we packed up and paddled in the rain and a fog that hid all landmarks, searching for the locks connecting us to Lower Saranac Lake and Ampersand Bay.

We were wet, cold, lost, scared. After an hour of wandering, perhaps in circles for all we knew, I saw a dim light in a cabin, and we tied up at a nearby dock. We walked towards the light and looked into the kitchen, where a woman was feeding a child in a highchair.

I knocked.

The woman turned, smiled, waved us in. Four scraggly guys in their 20s who had been in the woods most of a week, who thought they would never be warm again—she told us to come in and sit. Then she whipped up bacon and eggs and fed us.

Her husband came into the kitchen and offered us two options. We could wait until the fog lifted and get back in our canoes, or he'd put our canoes in the back of his truck and he'd take us to Saranac Lake. We got in the truck.

We were successful hitching rides back to Old Forge, which was not so odd in 1970. We got in our cars and drove home, to Plattsburgh and downstate.

The Good Samaritan parable appears in Chapter 10 of Luke's gospel. It's the source for hospital names and laws that protect people who make well-intentioned mistakes in emergency situations. It inspired a wonderful poem by e. e. cummings. It's a cornerstone story about how we should treat each other.

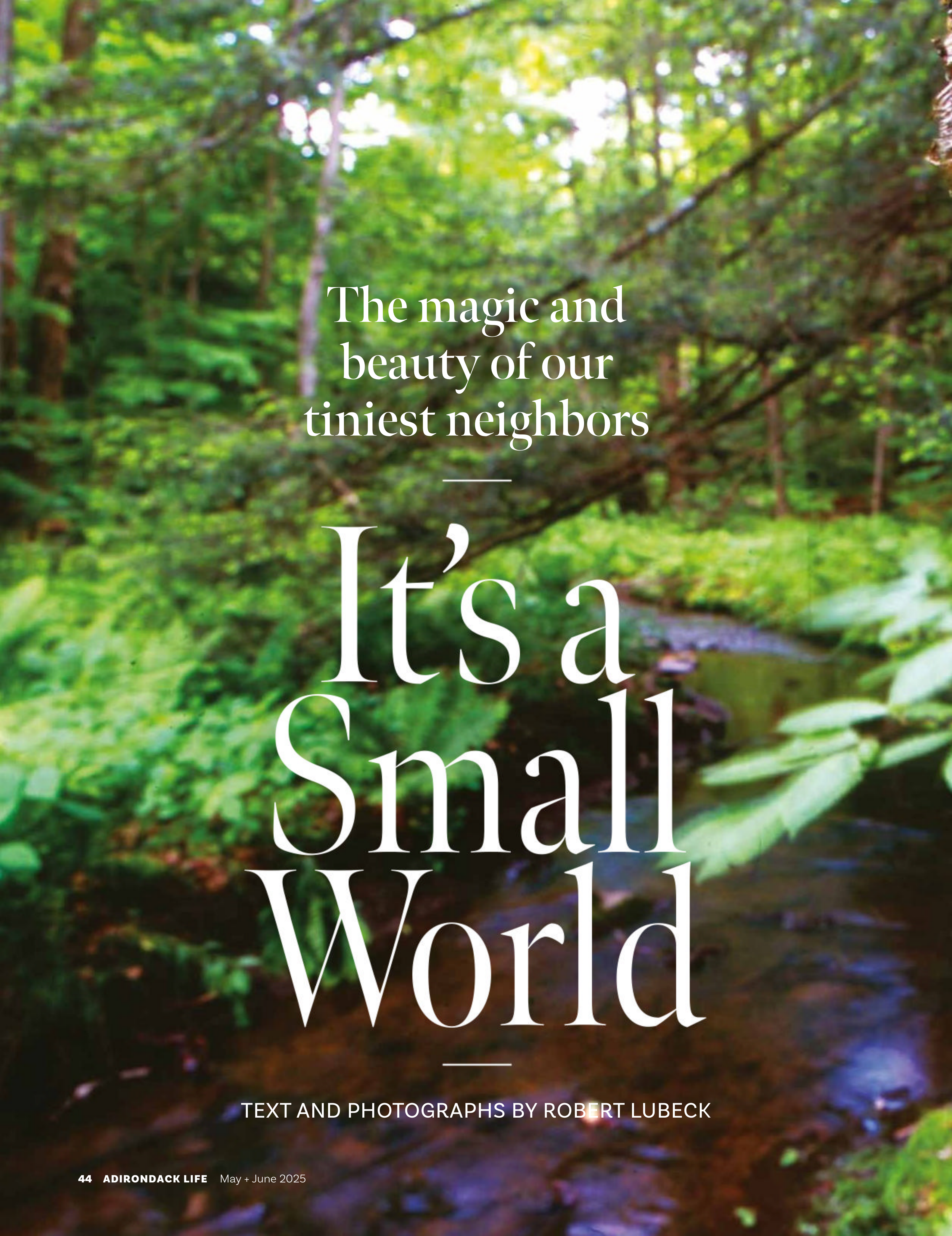
But I always wanted more. What happened after the Samaritan arranged for the care of the man who was beaten up and robbed? Did the Samaritan ever get thanked for his kindness? Luke doesn't tell us.

Fran Yardley's beautiful *Finding True North: A History of One Small Corner of the Adirondacks* is a 2018 memoir chronicling the restoration of the Bartlett Carry Club on Middle Saranac Lake that she and her husband, Jay, began in 1968. Yardley delves into the history of the Bartlett Carry Club, which had been in Jay's family for years, and she describes their laborious efforts to renovate the 37 cabins on the property.

I was enjoying the book, but at the end of Chapter three, she gives a snapshot of her early years at Bartlett Carry that startled me: "I have a sudden flashback to our second summer in that cabin, an early morning, dark and stormy. In the kitchen, as I spooned oatmeal into 10-month-old Gwyn's mouth, four rain-soaked and hypothermic campers appeared at that same back door. I lit a fire, and cooked up a batch of scrambled eggs. Jay got up late, wondering about the noise, and walked into the living room to see his baby on the floor entertaining four smiling, now warm and dry strangers."

And so, at a Hotel Saranac celebratory event of the Adirondack Center for Writing last spring, I approached my Samaritan, Fran Yardley: "Thank you. In 1970 you welcomed me and my friends. You were kind to us. I've always been grateful, impressed by your nonchalant generosity."

by Jerry McGovern
illustration by Takeyce Walter



The magic and beauty of our tiniest neighbors

It's a Small World

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPHS BY ROBERT LUBECK

EVERY PLACE HAS ITS SIGNATURE features, like Yellowstone's large mammals and geysers. Fairly or not, the Adirondack Park has been characterized as home to lots of bugs. (I use "bug" here in the general sense, interchangeable with "insect," though there are scientific differences.) As someone who has photographed in the field for decades, trying to capture various Adirondack subjects, I know what it's like to be tortured by blackflies, deer flies, horseflies and mosquitoes. I've even had a foot bitten by a giant waterbug. (It doesn't help when one is on a blood-thinner. Companions asked if I should go in for a transfusion. I settled for a cold beer.)

There was a time when we'd have to buy special products to clean the mayflies and other dead bugs off our vehicles. Not so much anymore. It's also harder to find butterflies, moths and other insects to photograph. It seems we're forgetting how it used to be.

It turns out that what I've been noticing has been echoed by the 'ologists and is supported by hard evidence. Studies

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: **Luna moth. Eastern tiger swallowtail larvae. Polyphemus moth with lichens. Giant mayflies on cattails.** PAGES 44–45: **Luna moths on birch trunk.**

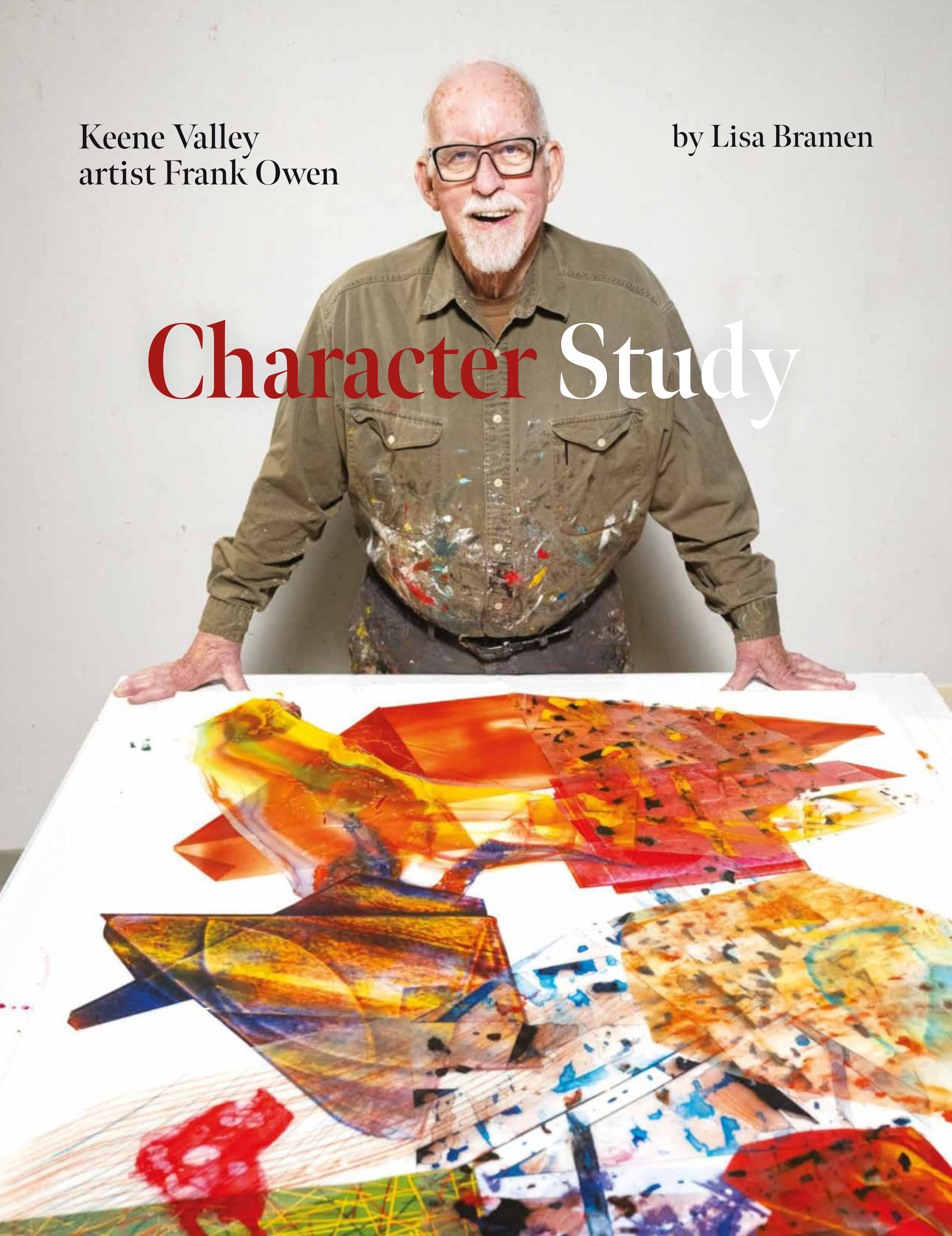
show that overall insect populations are declining by one to two percent per year. If there's an impending "bugpocalypse," should we care?

The term "fabric of life" is more than just a cliché—we are one part of nature and nature needs bugs. They serve as food for trout, birds, bats and more. They also pollinate, decompose the dead, build topsoil and disperse seeds. About three-quarters of flowering plants rely on them for pollination. More than a third of food crops worldwide—apples, avocados, cherries, plums and more—depend on bugs.

I worry that my grandchildren may miss out on the musical score of a warm summer night. Could the crickets and katydids vanish along with fireflies? Bugs are fantastically adaptable and resilient, but they face threats from habitat destruction, invasive species, climate change and the careless use of pesticides.

The Adirondack Park is a recreational destination, but our smallest neighbors also call it home—it's wise to remember that they help keep it the paradise we want it to be.

CLOCKWISE FROM ABOVE: **Spiny oak-slug moth larva. European mantis with winterberries. Hummingbird clearwing moth with pickerelweed. Twelve-spotted skimmer on black-eyed Susan.**



Character Study

Keene Valley artist Frank Owen

by Lisa Bramen

OWEN PHOTOGRAPH BY BEN STECHSCHULTE. PAINTINGS COURTESY OF NANCY HOFFMAN GALLERY

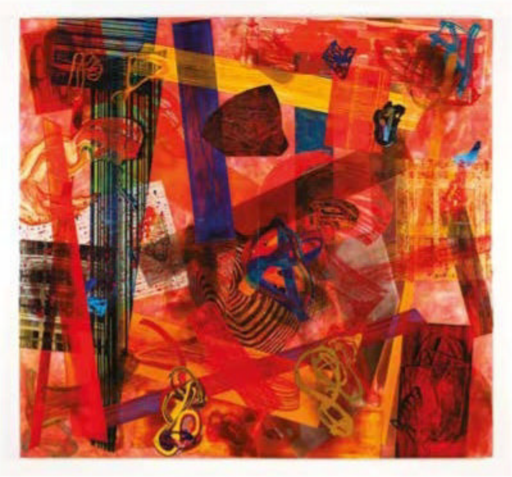
EVERY ADIRONDACK SMALL TOWN has its own cast of characters whose presence becomes as familiar as its landmarks, and just as entwined with its sense of place. For the better part of five decades, the affable Keene Valley artist Frank Owen has played a recurring role around town, with frequent appearances at the Ausable Inn, where you may find him chatting up hikers, contractors and anyone else who happens upon the only local watering hole.

Owen's face was even more familiar than usual last August, at the reception for his Keene Arts retrospective, where life-size cutouts of his bespectacled and goateed mug were handed out to guests. The masks were a nod to the show's tongue-in-cheek title, "Let's Be Frank."

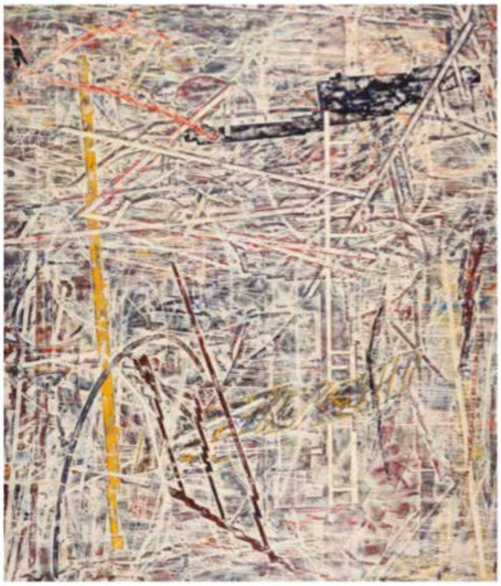
And who wouldn't want to be Frank? The 86-year-old painter has pulled off the rare feat of succeeding as an artist while residing in a tiny mountain town hundreds of miles from the epicenter of the American art world. His artwork is in the collections of Yale University; the Corcoran Gallery, in Washington DC; and nearly two dozen other museums across the country. He spends most days in his studio, working on vibrant large-scale abstract paintings that, in the words of his New York City dealer, Nancy Hoffman, are "a visual equivalent of the pleasure principle."

As part of what might be the last generation to consider art a viable career path and a respectable profes-

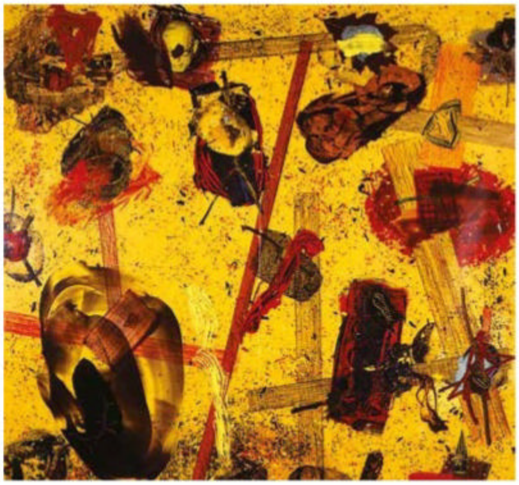
FACING PAGE: **Modernist artist Frank Owen in his Keene Valley studio.** RIGHT: **Owen's large-scale abstract paintings.**



Chime **(2014), 88" x 95"**



Calipers of the King Fisher **(1988), 80" x 69"**



Cairns: Students/Teachers **(1997), 84" x 84"**

sion in its own right, Frank reckons he was dealt a good hand. “What a fortunate thing to get to spend my life improvising and discovering things,” he says.

His aptitude for art revealed itself early. As a 10-year-old in Sacramento, California, where his family settled after his father served as a Navy medical corpsman in the Pacific during World War II, young Franklin produced a drawing inspired by Cubism—which he had read about in *Life* magazine—and declared it modern art.

Never one for idleness, Frank worked from a young age. He delivered newspapers, jerked sodas, fitted suits at a menswear shop and played washtub bass as part of a hotel house band. During the summers of 1959 and 1960, while working at the Manhattan department store B. Altman on a work-study program through Antioch College, Frank was invited to be a camp counselor at the Baldwin School camp in Keene Valley.

His first beer that summer at the Spread Eagle Inn, as the Ausable Inn was then called, offered no hint that he was destined to become a regular. It was when he met a young local woman named Martha Lee Edmonds that his fate was sealed. “We sparked romance and all that stuff,” Owen says, wiggling his fingers and eyebrows suggestively.

Martha Lee’s Keene Valley roots go back to the American Revolution, when one of her ancestors was a soldier in the Continental Army stationed in this area. For most of the 19th century, what are now known as the Cascade Lakes between Keene and Lake Placid were called Edmonds Ponds. The Adrian’s Acres neighborhood in Keene Valley, near the Garden, is named for her father, a contractor and developer. (Though he didn’t know it at the time, Frank’s family tree also includes a local connection; he is a distant cousin of North Elba firebrand John Brown.)

Martha Lee and Frank had a long-distance courtship for seven years, while he returned to Sacramento to finish his education. After a six-month tour as a Coast Guard reservist, Frank enrolled at UC Davis, where he pursued a graduate degree in art and served as a teaching

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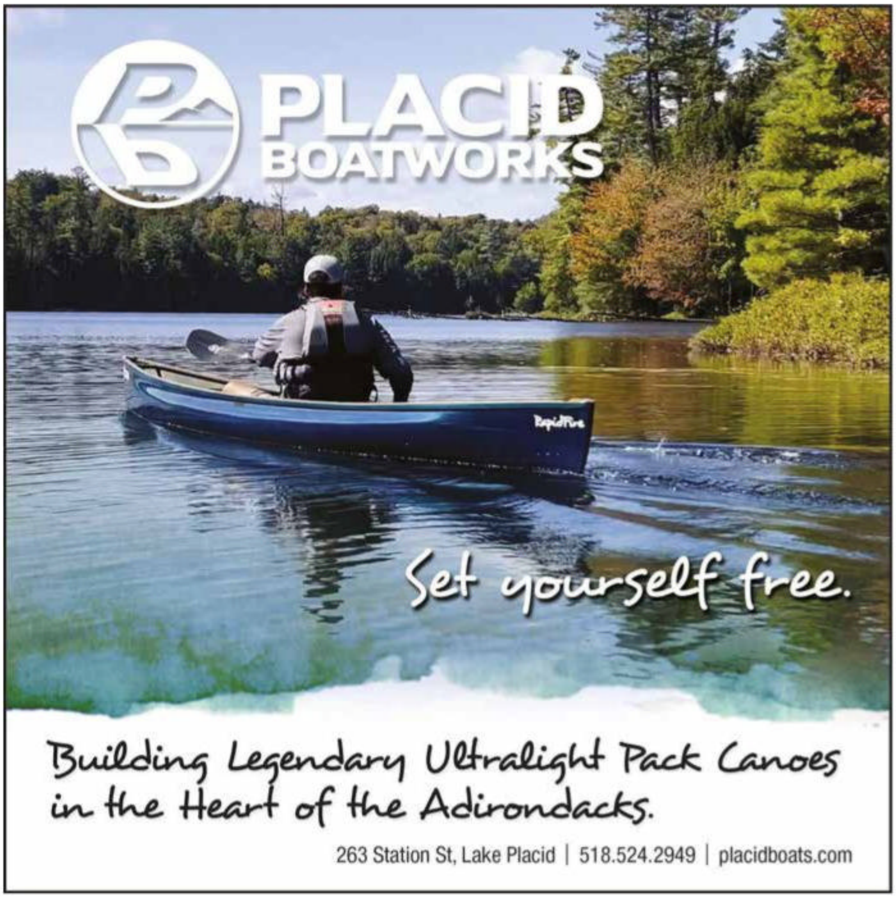
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assistant for the artist Wayne Thiebaud, who was famous for his paintings of cakes and pies.

The couple married in 1967, and Martha Lee moved to California, where she worked as a teacher while Frank finished his studies. The following year they moved to Manhattan, where they became part of the emerging SoHo art scene. Their New York City rite of passage was getting swindled out of their down payment on a loft by the founder of the Fluxus art movement, George Maciunas, whose accounting practices were as creative as his artwork.

In a more promising turn, Frank signed on with the legendary dealer Leo Castelli, who also worked with some of the most influential contemporary artists of the 20th century, including Andy Warhol, Jasper Johns, Frank Stella and Roy Lichtenstein. Castelli had a unique arrangement for artists on his roster, even those still early in their careers. He provided a monthly stipend of $500, an amount that covered rent and groceries, allowing artists to focus on their work without the immediate pressure of sales. While the money was advanced against future earnings, it provided a rare and steady financial foundation.

The following decade was an exciting period of growth and creativity, but by 1980 things had begun to change. Martha Lee had grown tired of living on the top floor of a loft with a leaking roof, and by then, they had a daughter, Kate, born in 1971, who was now of school age. Martha Lee and Kate moved back to Keene Valley, while Frank stayed on in the city. He spent summers in the Adirondacks, as they had always done.

That spring, he accepted an offer to be a visiting artist at Virginia Commonwealth University, in Richmond. When the semester ended, he and a student assistant packed up his studio in a 25-foot U-Haul, loaded with art supplies and a new collection of paintings, and headed back to Manhattan to hang his first show at the Nancy Hoffman Gallery.

As he pulled up to the gallery, Nancy greeted him with a somber expression. "I've got bad news, your loft is burning," Frank remembers her saying. "It's on fire,

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present tense."

Frank and his assistant rushed the four blocks to his building. By the time they arrived, the fire had been extinguished, but the damage was severe. Smoke filled the space, and everything inside was left waterlogged and ruined.

Frank spent the summer in Keene Valley, as usual, but this time the move was permanent. He rented the top floor of Pete Bigelow's storage barn to use as a studio—he later purchased the building—and joined the small pantheon of modernist artists, along with David Smith and Harold Weston, to make their home in the Adirondacks.

Keene Valley in the 1980s and '90s was a "lively place to be," Frank says, especially in the summer. Frank fell in with a circle of men, artist types that included novelist Russell Banks, poet Roger Mitchell, and artist-musician Scott Renderer, who gathered at each other's studios to drink beer and talk shop. Banks dubbed them the Valley Boys.

Still, there was always plenty of solitude and time to focus on making art and experimentation, liberated from the distractions of attending friends' openings and other art-world schmoozefests.

In a 2010 interview, Frank says he is often asked how the move to the Adirondacks affected his work, whether he misses the excitement of the city and the energy of being in conversation with other artists. His answer: "I go down about three or four times a year and keep everybody up late at night and exhaust all my friends and I see everything the city has to offer and then I get on a northbound train at Grand Central and quite happily ride back up here.

"And this is a charming community," he adds. "It's a small village with just enough people, many of whom are very interesting, all of them are positive. And all dedicated to an idea of being in a community. That's one thing that is quite nice."

In the late 1980s, when Governor Mario Cuomo established the Commission on the Adirondacks in the 21st Century to make recommendations on land-use issues within the Blue Line, Frank was

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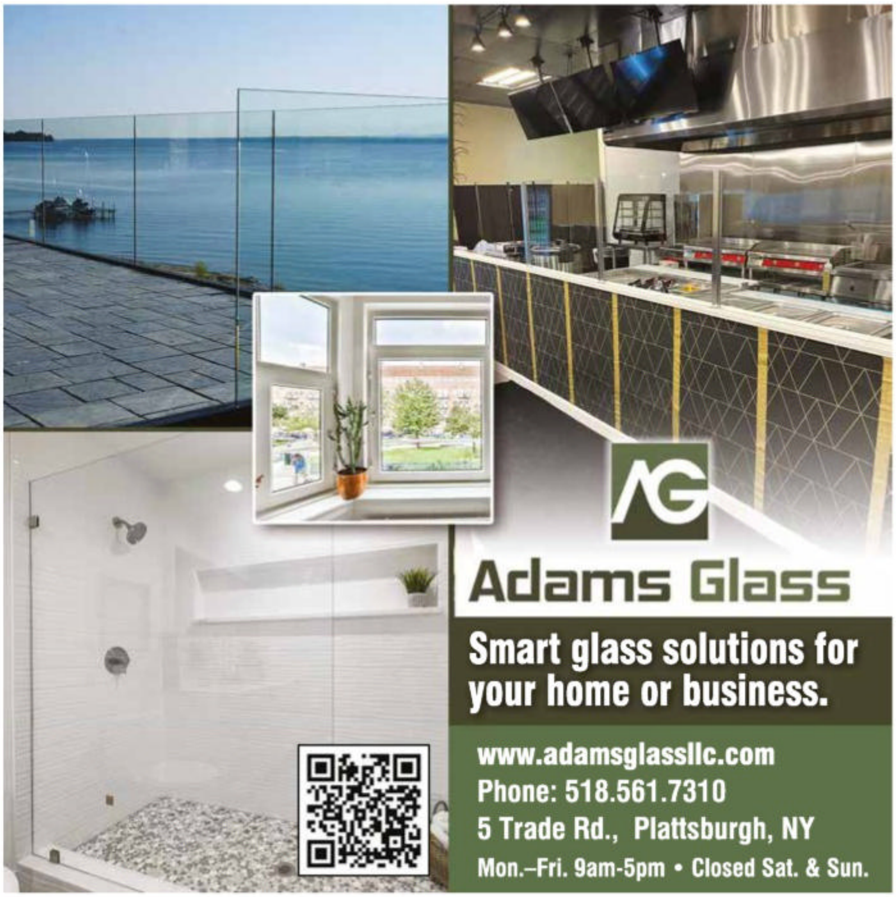
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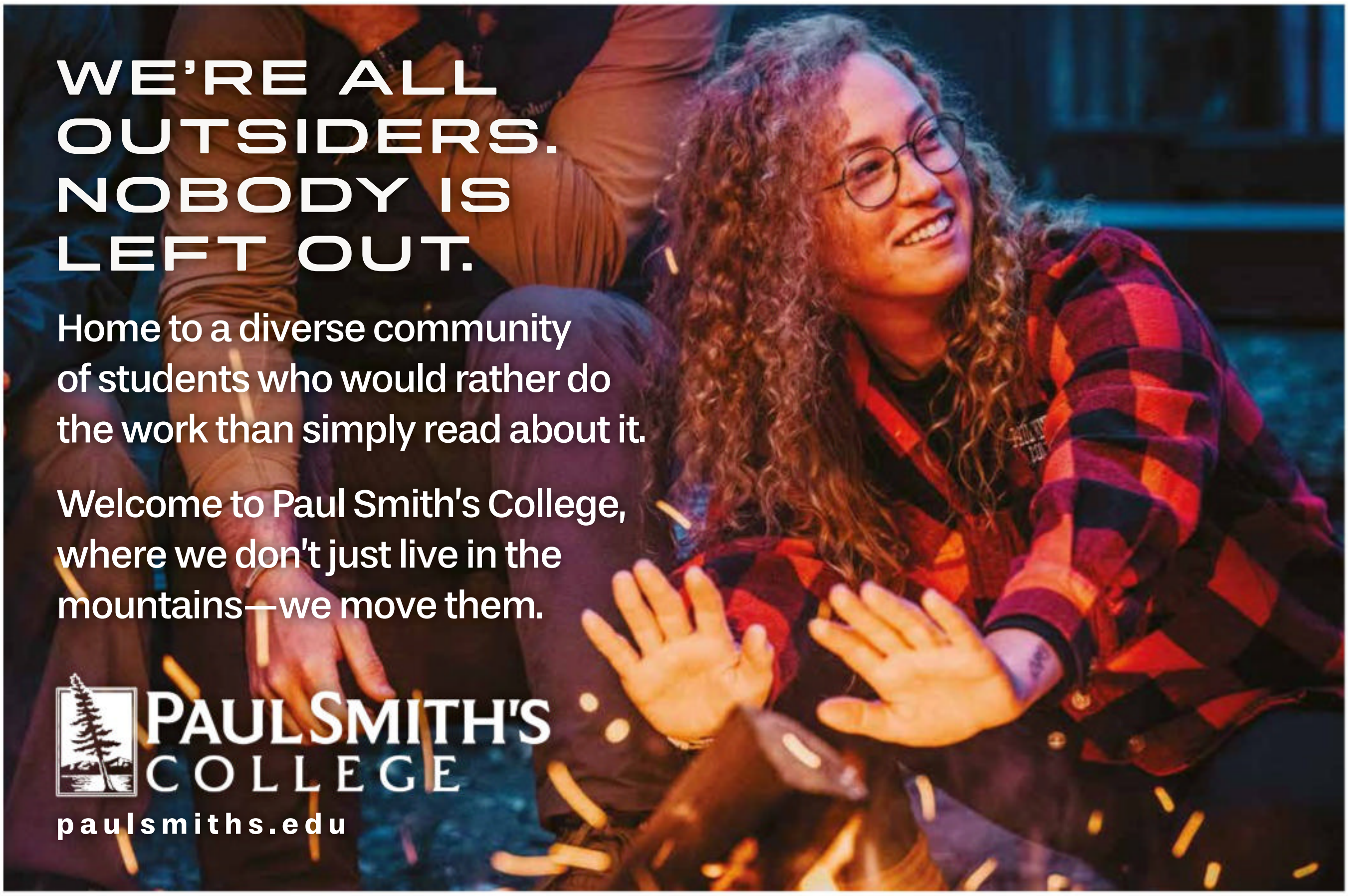
inspired to produce his only overtly Adirondack-themed artwork, which he describes as a kind of visual journalism. He attended meetings and protests and took photographs, which he incorporated, along with newspaper clippings, into a 25-foot-wide, 14-panel painting. The piece was part of a 1992 Adirondack Park centennial exhibition at the Adirondack Museum (now Adirondack Experience), in Blue Mountain Lake. Cuomo was in attendance, and asked Frank why his head appeared in three different sizes. In Frank's telling, he replied, "We don't know how big of a man you are yet."

Otherwise, any Adirondack references show up in a more abstract way. Whereas fellow Keene Valley artist Harold Weston painted soaring mountain- and cloudscapes, Frank casts his eyes downward, to the detritus of the forest floor, finding inspiration in the colors and textures of decaying leaves and rocks and twigs he picks up on his walks. He photocopies these forest finds and incorporates them through an elaborate technique he developed to create a multilayered effect.

He often works in verso, or front to back, painting on top of hardened sheets of clear acrylic gel, which he then cuts into shapes that he can collage and layer onto large canvases. The highly varnished surfaces and vivid colors give the paintings a glass-like appearance.

One of the hallmarks of Frank's work is experimenting with new techniques and materials. He often fashions tools out of everyday items, such as a scraper he devised out of rubber door molding. In a 2018 interview with artist and critic Alexi Worth, he says, "Valley Hardware [in Keene Valley] is a central factor of my creative life."

For a self-described "outgoing and buzzy guy," the inevitable shrinking of his social circle has been the downside of longevity. He is as lively a conversationalist as ever and remains driven to create and explore new ideas. He heeds his own advice, shared in a 1986 article for the *Adirondack Daily Enterprise*, "The main thing I do is to keep busy. Don't stop. Because if you do, you might just stop altogether."



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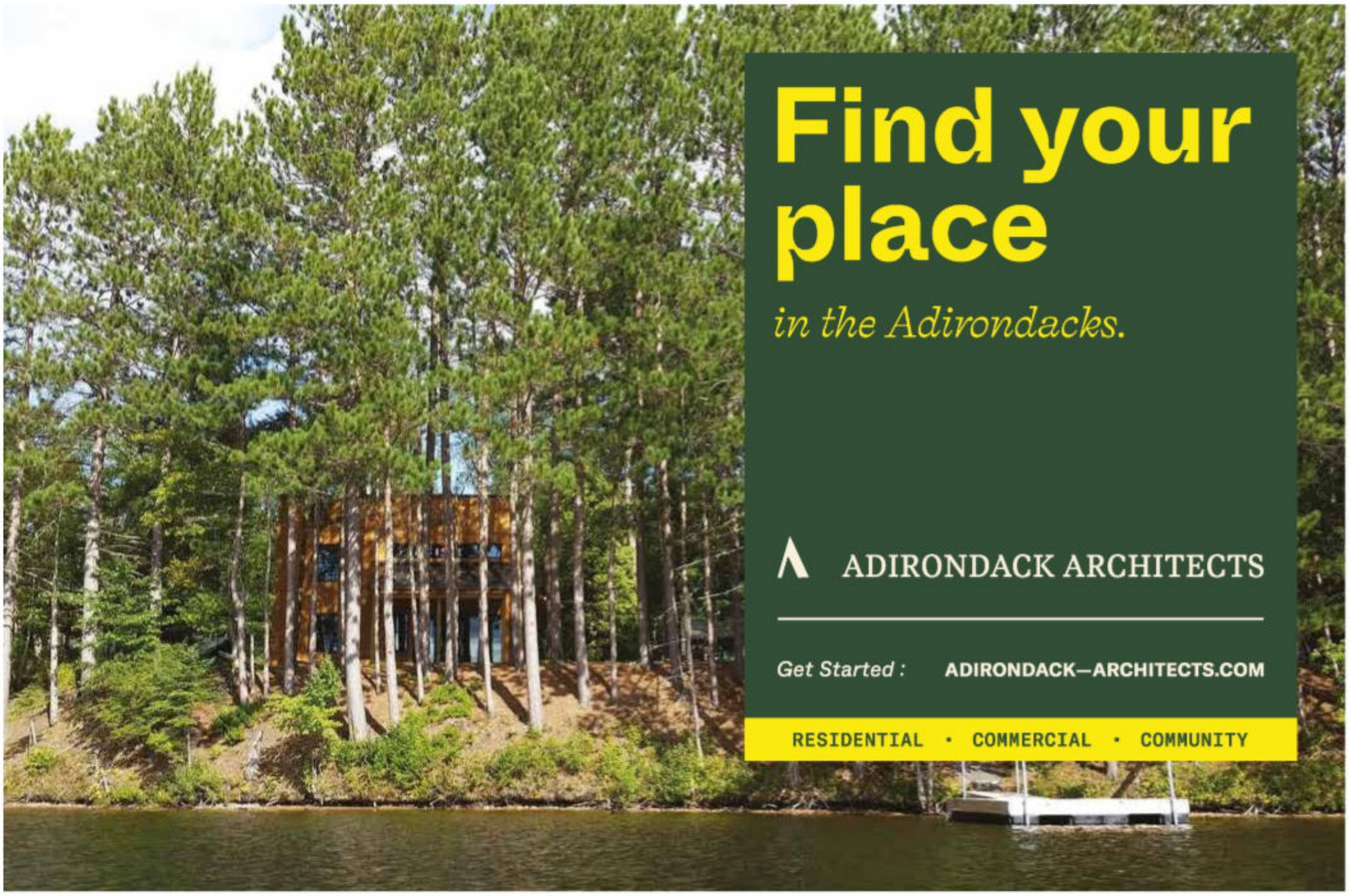

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NATURAL BEAUTY
Continued from page 40

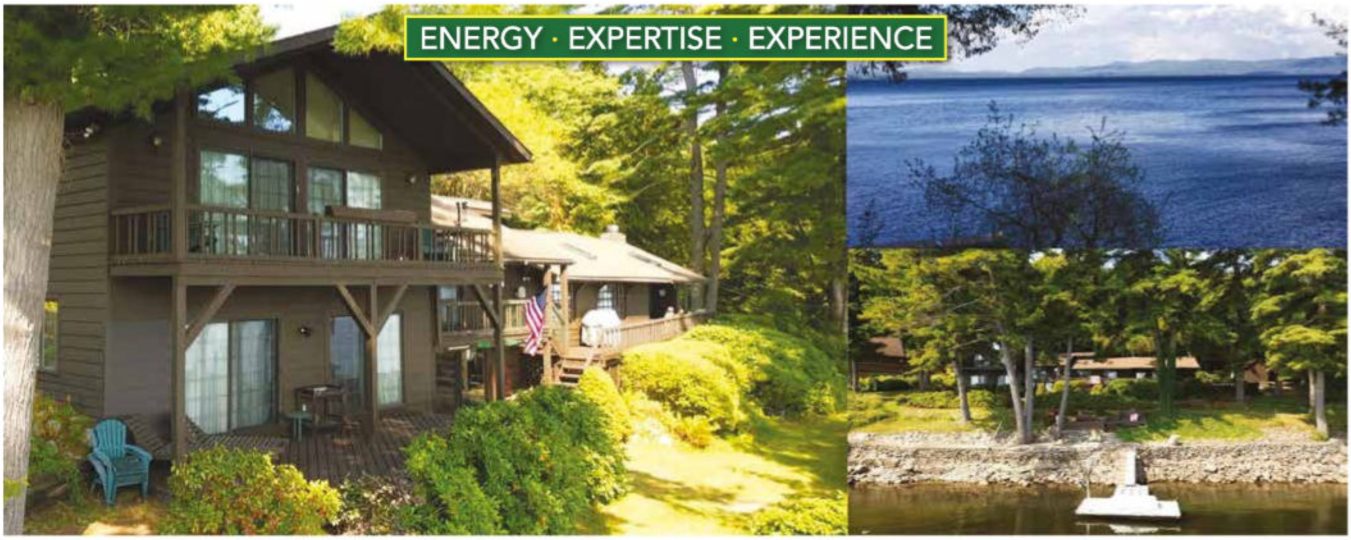
early-20th-century oil lamp crafted from a birch log. Just beyond, at the entrance of the light-themed gallery, there's a strikingly sculptural display of antique cressets (iron-and-wire cradles designed to carry a light source of wood, coal or oil-soaked rags, used for night hunting or fishing).

The show is a sensory experience, with each gallery set apart by color, lighting and distinctive "audioscapes"—birdsong, rustling leaves, the *whoosh* of northern lights. Stepping into the water-themed gallery feels like wading into a river, with blue streams of light and gauzy fabric above mirrored in the carpet pattern below. The exhibit's backdrops are eye-catching but not overwhelming. "We didn't want the design to overpower the art," Rice says.

The voices of often-overlooked artists are featured throughout. A placard near *Hurricane Mountain*, a 1956 oil painting by amateur painter and human-rights activist James N. Rosenberg—who lost a fortune in the stock market crash of 1929—deepens his work with a quote from his biography: "There in the Adirondacks, with their ever-changing moods, I find the chief sources for my landscapes. … My landscapes have been and are magic carpets on which I have flown from a world embittered by fear, hate, and greed."

Nearby, a video follows Akwesasne Mohawk storyteller and artist Natasha Smoke Santiago as she demonstrates her interpretation of traditional pottery techniques. In another meet-the-artist video, photographer Kristin Rehder explains how a Parkinson's disease diagnosis taught her a new way of understanding nature, her art and herself.

The exhibit includes 18 interactive elements in all, many designed to engage little hands and minds. Visitors can experiment with light and shadow, play with perspective, and explore textures represented in the surrounding works. Folk artist Edna West Teall's paintings do more than hang on the wall: with a touch of a screen, long-ago scenes of life in Reber come alive with movement and readings from Teall's *Adirondack Tales: A Girl Grows Up in the Adirondacks in the*



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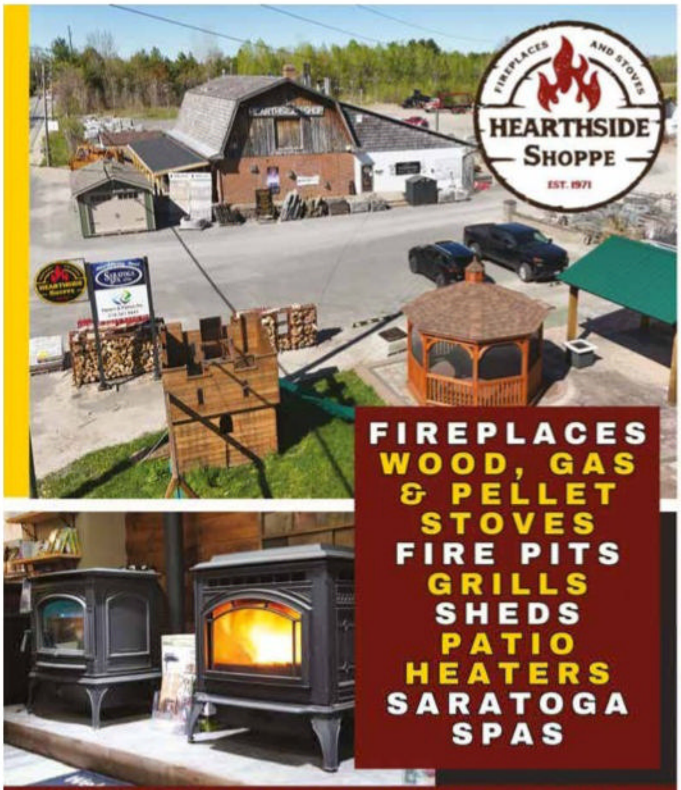

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1880s, published posthumously in 1970.

The final gallery, dedicated to the “striking peaks of the Adirondacks,” incorporates some of the tools that artists once lugged into the wilderness, such as an apothecary scale, paint powders, an unwieldy easel—even Arthur Fitzwilliam Tait’s 1852 Bowie knife.

Those nuts-and-bolts artifacts are a fitting introduction to the attached art lab, a lively makerspace that painter/sculptor/photographer/woodworker Barney Bellinger helped design, inspired by the controlled chaos of his own Mayfield studio. The space, which spills outside, will host activities led by visiting artists throughout the season.

Artists & Inspiration in the Wild is the largest permanent exhibit of Adirondack art in the world, but it’s not static. Works will be rotated in and out each season, both to protect the collections and to give the kaleidoscope of viewpoints a little twist. Like the region it honors, the show will continue to be a living, growing work in progress.

The Adirondack Experience (518-352-7311, www.theadkx.org), at 9097 Route 30, in Blue Mountain Lake, opens for the season on May 23.

This year’s visiting artists are:

June: Jacoub Reyes, a Florida-based printmaker and installation artist with Caribbean and Pakistani roots who focuses on the themes of colonialism and ecosystems.

July: Iakonikonriiosta, a citizen of the Mohawk Nation, Bear Clan, who preserves and shares Kanien’kehaka history and traditions through her quilts.

August: Tom Bonamici, a bag and clothing designer from Oregon who has turned his attention to lightweight materials for backcountry travel.

September: Réka Szabó, a Hungarian visual and conceptual artist specializing in environmental art and site-specific installations that delve into the bonds between human existence and nature.

The museum will also host four regional artists for shorter residencies: illustrator Lydia Nicolas; plein-air painter Sandra Hildreth; Akwesasne sculptor and potter Natasha Smoke Santiago; and Akwesasne basket-maker Angello Johnson.

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A Star from Star Lake

The extraordinary career of Marian Young Taylor

BY NEAL BURDICK

She interviewed hundreds of mid-20th century influencers on her popular New York City radio show. She wrote on topics from high fashion (she herself was a fashion designer) to 1930s politics in Germany for *The New York Times* and the Scripps-Howard Syndicate, where she was women's editor. She acted in summer stock, was on the nominating committee for the Tony Awards, and was partial to opera at Carnegie Hall. She wrote a book on cooking and taught journalism. In 1950 she chaired the New York City March of Dimes and was on the board of trustees of the post-war International Rescue Committee; that year, her annual income was reportedly about $100,000, plus a chauffeur and five staff "girls," ranking her among the richest working women in America.

Marian Young Taylor, aka Martha Deane, was a top midcentury journalist and radio personality.

HEADSHOT FROM *MARTHA DEANE'S COOKING FOR COMPLIMENTS*, 1954

Not bad for someone who grew up on a dead-end dirt road "up back of" Star Lake, as northwestern Adirondackers still like to say.

Marian Gertrude Young was born November 21, 1908. Her parents, Edwin Young and Mamie Zuber Young, lived on Youngs Road, probably named for Edwin's family. He guided, and they operated a hotel, a fox farm and a fox hunting preserve. They may have been more successful with foxes than with hunting lodges; in 1913, their inn burned to the ground, as had its predecessor. And its successor.

Marian graduated from Gouverneur High School, perhaps billeting in town, and enrolled at St. Lawrence University, in Canton, in 1926—at that time, a rare step for a teenage girl from the backwoods. She dropped out after her sophomore year, possibly for financial reasons.

After returning to Star Lake to teach school for a few years—she had 26 pupils spanning eight grades in the one-room schoolhouse where she had learned her three Rs—Young made her way to New York City to study at the American Academy of Fine Arts. She then joined the Newspaper Enterprise Association (NEA), a Scripps-Howard feature syndicate.

"In 1934, [Young] was named women's editor and sent to Europe as a foreign correspondent," according to her 1973 obituary in *The New York Times*. She was the only American journalist in the Reichstag "when Hitler announced that he had sent troops into the Rhineland."

Her dispatches from Germany were headlined "Nazis Bring Bright Note into Lives Of Workers," "Reich's Downtrodden Youths Come Back in Uniform," and "'First Lady' of Reich Praises Decrees Sending Women Back to Kitchens."

These raise the unavoidable question: What was Marian Young's opinion of Nazism?

Her "Bright Note" article, datelined Leipzig and published in several NEA syndicate newspapers, begins, "The German laborer has put his shoulder to the swastika and is striving with might and main to keep the Nazi machine going." She described how Hitler's "shrewd human understanding" allowed him to "devise alluring means to win the workman to his banner," such as decent housing, unemployment benefits and paid vacations.

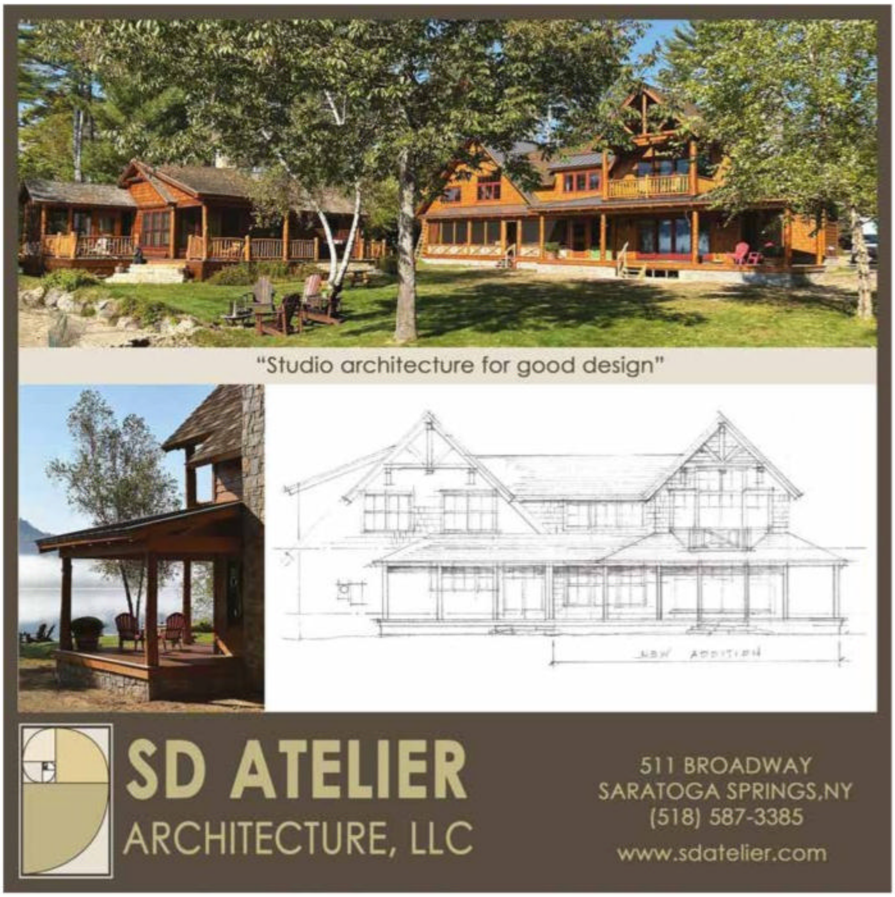
In other articles she noted "awesome reverence for the military," but also commented on German young men and boys "goose-stepping to martial music over the freshly dug grave of the Versailles Treaty." She wryly described old men tired of war, eyes glazed at the Nazi salute. In a profile of Magda Goebbels, wife of Minister of Propaganda and Public Enlightenment Joseph Goebbels, Young discussed the Reich's drive, which Frau Goebbels encouraged, to require young women to "stay in their kitchens … [and] rear warrior sons." Young was the first reporter, regardless of gender, to whom Germany's de facto First Lady granted a public interview.

Reading between the lines, one senses that Young was suspicious of Nazism, still little known outside Germany in the mid-1930s, but was reporting coldly and professionally, with a subtle slant to her writing. "Somewhere in my memory, Frau Goebbels did not feel the articles were flattering," says Charles Shene, Young's third cousin once removed and the keeper of family records.

"I never met Marian in person," says Shene, who was 11 years old and living in Fine, a few miles from Star Lake, when she died. "But I cannot see her having any Nazi sympathies. I believe she was a patriotic American, a fair-minded critic and a compassionate person."

Whatever her views, Young returned stateside in 1937 and married advertising executive William Taylor. They had three children; one of them, Niki Taylor Scott, became a distinguished journalist herself. Despite never having earned a college degree, Young (now Young Taylor) taught journalism at Centenary Junior College, in New Jersey.

In 1941, the "Martha Deane" interviewer position opened at WOR radio in New York City. Young Taylor auditioned and was hired. She was the third "Mar-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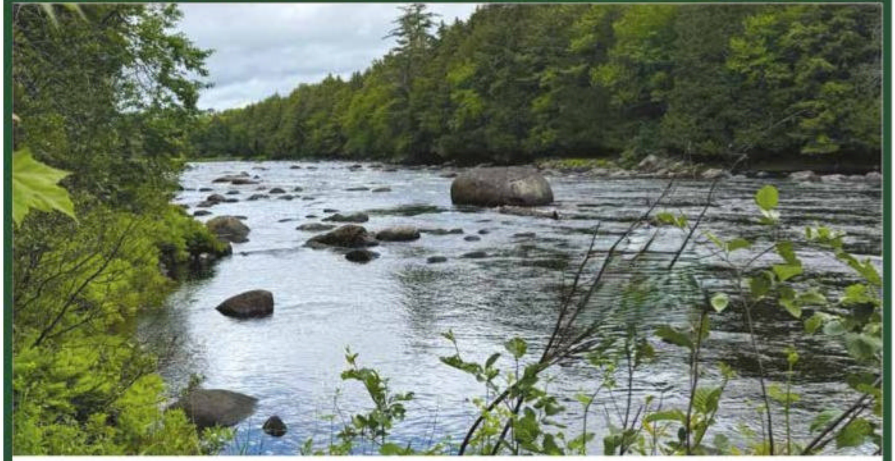

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tha Deane," a name that was owned by WOR. It had been created by a station executive who tied Martha, "the lady in the New Testament who busied herself with household affairs," according to a 1942 story in *The New Yorker*, with Deane "because it was supposed at WOR to be a lucky name."

Young Taylor retained her Scripps-Howard position, but soon left it to concentrate on radio, where she really made her mark. Over the next 32 years, five mornings a week for 45 minutes, "Martha Deane" would conduct live interviews with some 10,000 powerful and famous guests (see page 69) on a limited-range AM station. She became, said her *New York Times* obituary, "one of the best-known journalists on radio," and likely the best-known woman in that male-dominated field. Some of her interviews were repackaged for sale on LP records.

As Herbert Hoover supposedly said of himself, Young Taylor had "a face made for radio," but her ready smile, conversational tone, and ability to put people at ease were her trademarks in the days before television made good looks more important. Those traits enabled her to scoop the mainstream press by prying gossip or state secrets from the most tight-lipped personalities. During the Korean War, for example, she cajoled powerful Ohio Senator Robert Taft into revealing a U.S. policy position on that country's conflict.

Her October 1961 interview with Julia Child and Simone Beck, coauthors of *Mastering the Art of French Cooking*, is representative of her style. Deane's conversational delivery clearly relaxes her guests. Along with banter about the book itself, there's discussion of specific content that Deane sensed would interest her audience: how to flute a mushroom (think champagne flute plus a sharp knife) or prepare coq au vin (Child: "use an old hen").

Another trademark was her work ethic, which she hinted she acquired from her parents back in Star Lake. "I do my homework," she said. (She typically scanned six newspapers every day before heading to her studio at 9 a.m., and read six books a week.) "She did not want to do a chatty talk show with gossip but little substance," according to *The New York Times*. "She wanted guests who would discuss pressing issues in life, politics and culture."

"I don't do froth," she said in a 1969 profile in *Look* magazine headlined "First Lady of Radio." "I told them I wouldn't do ONE household hint."

It was said, anecdotally, that 80 percent of her guests were men and 80 percent of her audience were women, but she never saw it that way. "Women's angle? What's that?" she once jabbed at a reporter. "Women are people. If a story is good, it's good. If it's bad, it's bad." She strove for balance and did not shy away from controversy, inviting onto her show civil rights advocates, known Communists and avant-garde artists.

"I think Marian was progressive regarding women's rights," says Shene. "I think she was a modern woman, maybe a little bit ahead of her time."

Perhaps her Adirondack upbringing inspired her to multitask professionally. She became interested in fashion at the American Academy of Fine Arts and, once at the NEA, began writing a fashion column that eventually ran in 700 newspapers. She also designed fashion accessories, among them a hat made of old dishrags. And she wrote an award-winning beauty column under the pseudonym Alicia Hart, and a society column bylined Betsy Schuyler.

As Marian Young Taylor, she wrote *Martha Deane's Cooking for Compliments*, a compilation of recipe and cooking outtakes from her show, published in 1954. Like her, it was both informative and gently humorous: chapter titles include "Fish for Approval" and "Your Just Desserts."

Not surprisingly, Young Taylor piled up awards, averaging nearly one every other year. Most were designated for women only. In 1968, however, she took home a Broadcast Pioneers of America Distinguished Service trophy. Among five recipients, she was the only woman.

During this multi-pronged and busy career, it's unknown if she revisited her Adirondack roots. She may have spent

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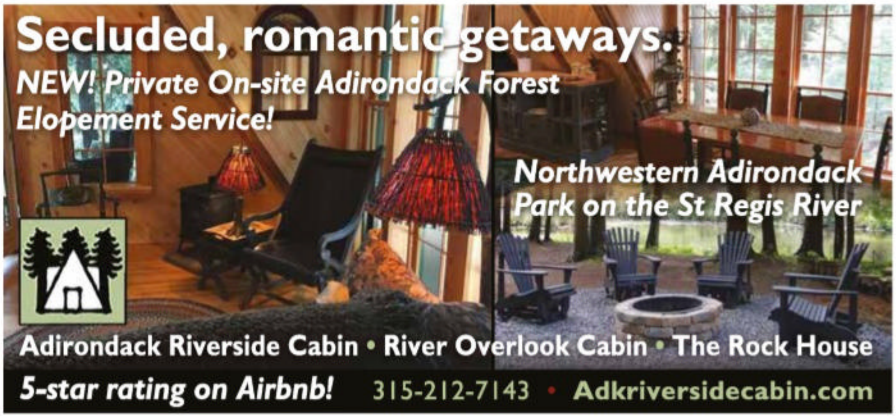

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holidays and vacations at the Taylors' summer house on the north shore of Long Island. At those times, her substitute was Dorothy Parr, her sister, who was a correspondent for the *Watertown Daily Times* and had a weekly Red Cross program on Watertown's WWNY radio. Parr was "a [local media] celebrity in her own right," says Fine Town Historian Mark Friden.

Marian Young, Marian Taylor, Alicia Hart, Betsy Schuyler, Martha Deane—her husband once inscribed a gift "to the women I love." All of them died of cancer at age 65, on December 9, 1973, at home in the Royalton Hotel in Midtown Manhattan, a far cry from her childhood on that backwoods dirt road.

In Star Lake today, there is no indication that she ever existed. The Western Adirondack Presbyterian Church, where her parents were active, has a stained-glass window memorializing both them and Dorothy. But not Marian. Even in her hometown, a headline by journalist Steve Dunlop may say it best: "The Most Famous Female Journalist Almost No One Remembers."

Below is a sampling of the guests Marian Young Taylor interviewed during her 32-year career as host of "The Martha Deane Show."

- **Presidents Dwight D. Eisenhower and Richard Nixon**
- **New York Governor Nelson Rockefeller**
- **Representative Geraldine Ferraro**
- **Senator Barry Goldwater**
- **The Duke and Duchess of Windsor**
- **Norman Thomas, six-time Socialist candidate for president**
- **The Lone Ranger, the Green Hornet, Superman and the Shadow**
- **Jimmy Stewart**
- **Frank Sinatra**
- **Kate Smith**
- **Betty Friedan**
- **Martin Luther King Jr.**
- **Coretta Scott King**
- **Admiral Richard Byrd**
- **Jacques and Philippe Cousteau**
- **Neil Armstrong**
- **Pope John Paul II**
- **Eleanor Roosevelt**
- **Margaret Meade**

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Memories of Ravencroft

My mountain home

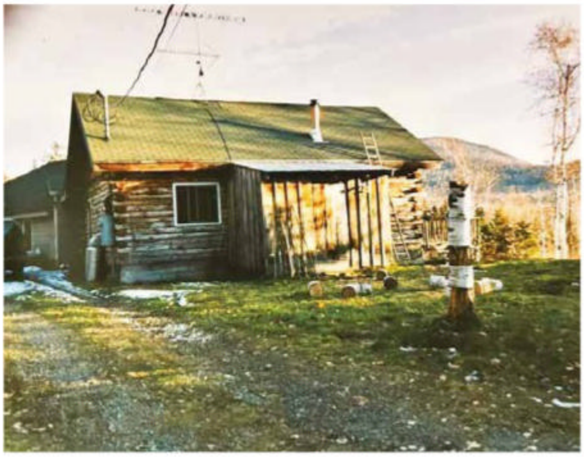
BY ALEX SHOUMATOFF

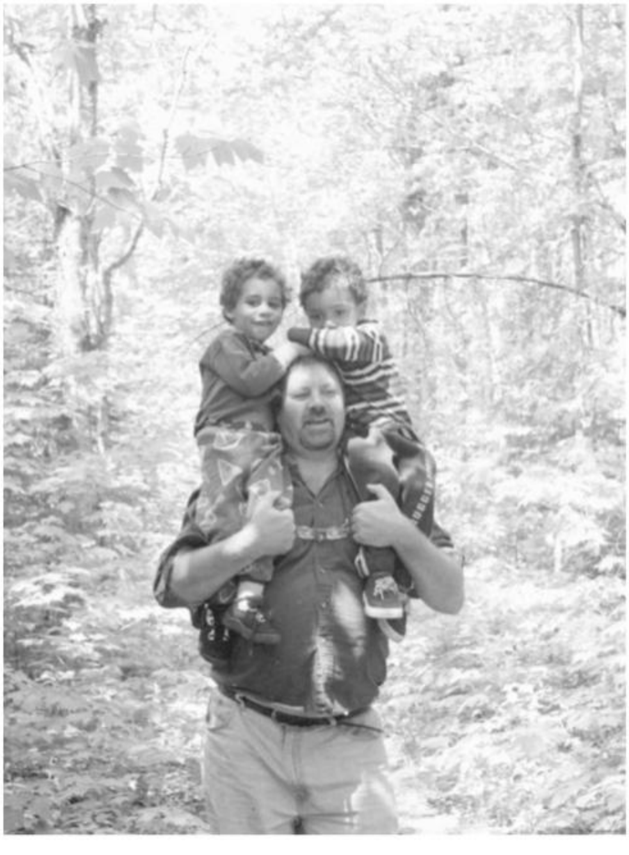
In 1985 I bought 40 acres of wilderness at the very top of East Hill in Keene. The chain of previous owners included the philosopher William James, who attended the Glenmore Summer School of Culture Sciences, across O'Toole Road and Gulf Brook below, along with George Santayana, John Dewey, Freud, Jung, Felix Adler and other great minds of the early 20th century; Jack Paar, the original host of the *Tonight Show*; three Black cab drivers from Brooklyn, when there was a boxers' training camp down the road; and the Murrays, who lived on Hurricane Road and sold the property and moved to Georgia because Mrs. Murray was allergic to blackflies. I was the first owner to do anything with it.

It took two weeks to chainsaw out the view. It was spectacular: 30 miles of nothing human, with the pyramid of Mount Marcy at the end of the green sea of trees, and the jagged ridges of Wolfjaw, Gothics and Haystack to the left, rising out of it like breaching whales, and the tip of Big Slide poking up to the right, behind the Cascades.

An old hippie friend from New Hampshire and I put up a 20-by-30-foot log cabin in 13 days, chainsawing the notches and banging down the logs, planed on two sides, with hundred-penny nails. In the beginning we heated it and cooked on a woodstove, illuminated it with Aladdin lamps, relieved ourselves in an outhouse in back, and fetched water from a nearby brook. The cabin sat at 2,300 feet and was the highest house

The cabin, built at an elevation of 2,300 feet. View from Ravencroft. The author and his sons on the Keene property, circa 1997.





RAVENCROFT VIEW AND AUTHOR WITH HIS SONS PHOTOGRAPHS BY NATHAN FARB. CABIN PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY OF THE AUTHOR

on East Hill and one of the highest in the whole state. We were living down in New Rochelle, and I would come up to the cabin with my two little boys whenever I could.

The 13,784-acre Hurricane Mountain Wilderness began 350 feet out the back door, and to the north loomed the 800-foot face of Big Crow Mountain. Sometimes the ravens who nested on its ledges would swoop down and greet us with fantastic aerial acrobatics. I called the camp Ravencroft in their honor.

Coming from a family of natural scientists, I took a keen interest in the flora and fauna of the property and taught my five boys (two from my Brazilian wife, and after we split up, three from my wife of 33 years, whom I met in Uganda in 1987) the mushrooms, birds, butterflies, reptiles and amphibians, mammals, trees, shrubs, wildflowers and ferns on it. We found an exceedingly rare blue chanterelle mushroom, and half a dozen species of *Boletus*. The most abundant one was the edible yellow-stemmed *B. auripes*. There were probably unidentified subspecies of *Boletus* on the 40 acres, as well as of little butterflies called ringlets. They came out after the mourning cloaks, the first to emerge, having overwintered in cocoons, and were followed in the early summer by swarms of white admirals and of tiger swallowtails, whose numbers have dwindled dramatically in recent years, as have the monarchs, whose caterpillars we found on the milkweed growing in Crow Clearing above us. We brought one plant with several tiny caterpillars down and put it in a vase of water on our kitchen table and watched the caterpillars eat the leaves and grow and spin cocoons and emerge and fly out our open sliding-glass door. The valley below was full of milkweed, on which I found monarchs at five stages of their metamorphosis. Subsequently, most of the milkweed in the valley was mowed down, tragically eradicated by ignorance of their importance to these amazing endangered butterflies. Today you're lucky to see a monarch anywhere in the Adirondacks.

In 1988 Robert Redford bought the

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movie rights to my *Vanity Fair* story about the murder of Chico Mendes, the leader of the Amazon rubber-tappers' union, and with the proceeds we expanded the cabin to include a kitchen, dining room, master bedroom, bathroom and a large booklined study.

Sometimes in the summer we would leave the deck lights on overnight, and in the morning luna moths, several species of hawk moth and a dozen other moth species would be clinging to the screen of the sliding-glass door.

Once we returned from a trip abroad to find the old cabin windows swarming with houseflies. I opened the door, hoping they would fly out, and in flew a chickadee who spent several hours pigging out on them and finally, his belly so distended he could hardly fly, he took off, and the next day he came back and polished them off.

We saw many kinds of birds on the property over the years: peregrine falcons, black vultures, red-tailed, sharp-shinned and Cooper's hawks coasting up from the valley and perching in our trees, which included a huge shadbush, whose red berries cedar waxwings feasted on.

One time I was walking down our path to the trail to Big Crow with my little boys Oli and Zach, the latter of whom was about three, when I turned around just in time to see a huge great-horned owl, wings outspread, about to swoop down and take off with him. I shouted and waved my arms menacingly at the owl and he aborted.

Every spring a yellow-bellied sapsucker would return from the Caribbean and drum deafeningly on our tin roof at five in the morning to attract a mate. We also saw pileated, hairy and downy woodpeckers, flickers, roughed grouse (partridge, to the locals), woodcock (the males did their spectacular courtship display, rising hundreds of feet into the air while emitting nasal pents, right in our front yard), and dozens of other species. Wood thrushes sing in the d minor pentatonic, the blues scale; one time, sitting on the deck with my guitalele, I jammed with a hermit thrush singing in a tree below.

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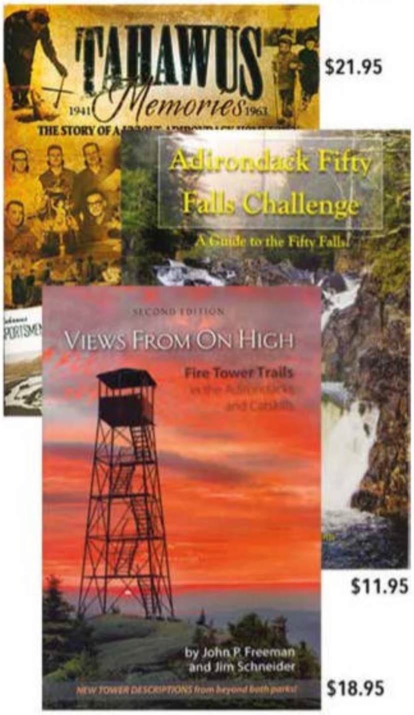
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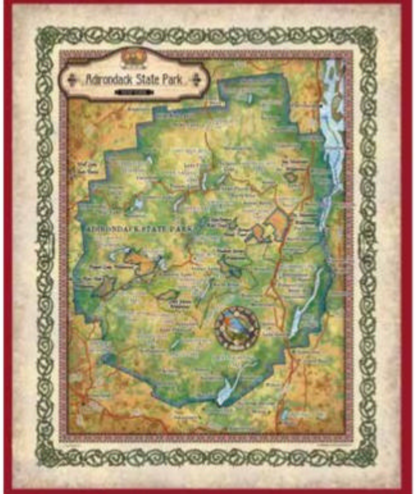

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Mammals included black bear (who got into our garbage cans), coyotes (who howled at the bottom of our driveway), white-tailed deer (who grazed on our front lawn). One summer there was a brown ermine snooping around the house, and in the winter, having turned white, it dropped down from a crack in the ceiling, scaring the Bejesus out of us.

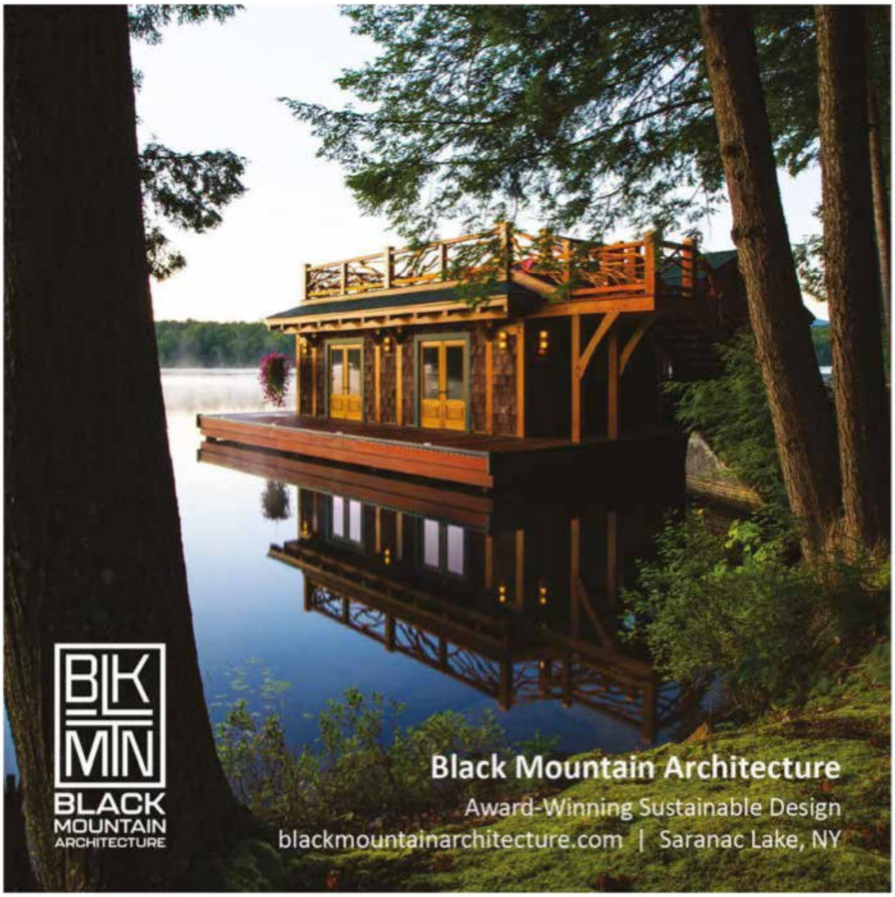
Zach loved to watch the crocodile hunter Steve Irwin on TV and he found ring-necked and garter snakes, house toads, red efts and other reptiles and amphibians on the property.

Ravencroft didn't have many hardwoods, being too high up, only a few sugar maples or oaks, but ironwood and moosewood maples, three species of white birch, yellow birch, black birch, a little black cherry grove that tent caterpillars laid waste to, a huge Scotch pine, tall black spruce that were slowly killed by spruce beetles, lots of balsam fir, several species of "popple" or poplar, including "bomagilia" as the old-timers called the Balm of Gilead one.

I climbed Big Crow more times than I can remember, taking the path I had cut up through the woods behind the house to the trail up from Crow Clearing. One summer, when I was in good shape, I ran out the kitchen door and got to the top in 19 minutes. Another summer, I took my driver and a golf ball, which I drove off the top. My best drive, with an orange ball, nearly made it down to the front yard.

Our water, pumped up from 320 feet by an artesian well drilled by an outfit down in Chestertown, was unbelievably pure, cold and delicious. We could have bottled and sold it.

One April morning, as the snow was disappearing, I took the two older boys on cross-country skis up the left bank of Gulf Brook and after 300 to 400 yards, we found the remains of big barrels, some of the wood still in rusted hoops, and some complicated contraption for boiling down liquor—an old still, I realized. The O'Toole brothers, the cellar-hole of whose farmhouse was in Crow Clearing. They brewed applejack during Prohibition. In fact, they were running a truckload of their hooch up through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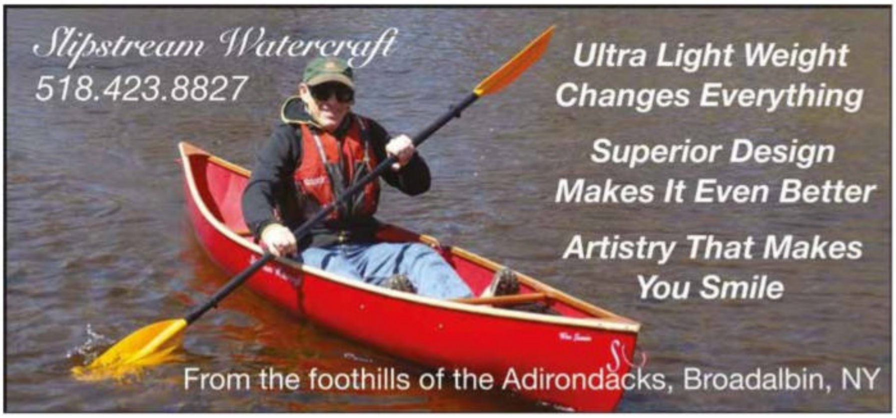
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the Cascades to Placid, totally sloshed themselves, when they drove off the road into one of the lakes, and that was the end of them and their operation.

About 150 yards up Gulf Brook there was a mossy bed—“the secret mossy platform,” we called it, where lots of orange chanterelles, the prize edible fungus of the region, grew.

My *Adirondack Life* articles in those days were deftly edited by the magazine’s editor-in-chief, Christopher Shaw, who was living in a cabin on the West Branch of the Ausable River where, according to some local sources, James Earl Ray hid out after shooting Martin Luther King, from which he escaped to Canada.

After Chris left the magazine, in 1988, I wrote a book on the murder of Chico Mendes, which I presciently titled, considering the state of the world today, *The World is Burning*. Satellite photos were showing thousands of fires burning out of control in the Amazon.

Chris would show up late in the morning and I, sitting in an armchair, would read him the latest pages I had written on long, yellow legal paper, making changes along the way and incorporating his suggestions, and he would type them on my computer. That August we were invited by friends for dinner at the Ausable Club, in St. Huberts, and it was 100 degrees Fahrenheit. For the first time in its history the men were allowed to take off their coats and ties.

In the last few years, Chris has written three novels about the Adirondacks. *The Power Line* is an instant classic, as is Russell Banks’s magisterial historical biography of John Brown, *Cloudsplitter*.

Russell met the poet Chase Twitchell while both were teaching for a term at the University of Alabama. I knew Chase’s sister and played golf frequently with their dad, Chaz, a retired prep-school Latin teacher, and I knew Russell from Harper & Row, where we both had the same editor. Two years after I bought the future site of Ravencroft, he and Chase bought a house with 70 acres halfway down Hurricane Road, and we saw a lot of each other. At various times he showed up with Willem Dafoe, Paul

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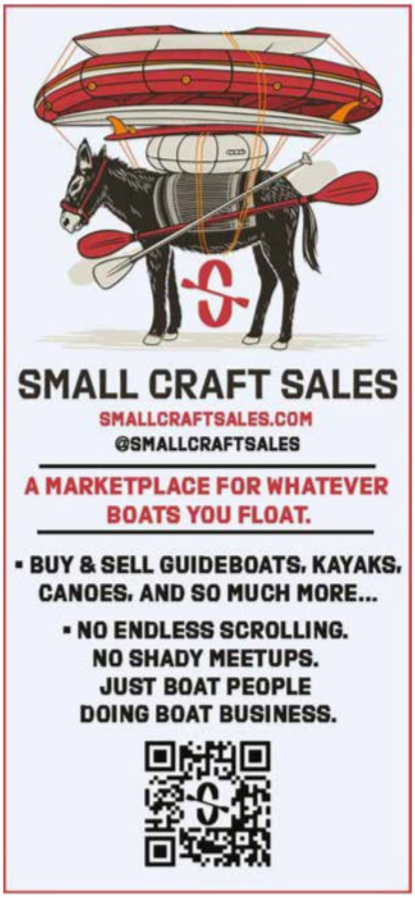
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Auster, Mira Nair and Paul Schrader.

Two summers ago, at Russell's packed memorial service at the Keene Valley Congregational Church, I sat next to Joyce Carol Oates, who has published more than 50 novels. "I was very fond of Russell," she told me. "We taught together [at Princeton] for 40 years."

Before, during and after the 1994 Rwandan genocide, my wife and I got visas for more than 20 of her family members. Ravencroft became a stop on an underground railroad where they stayed until we could get them over the Canada border, where they got asylum and, today, are all leading safe, productive lives.

One of the high points of our years at Ravencroft was a New Year's Eve party we threw there in the early '90s, when we were living at Ravencroft full-time. More than 50 people came, all our friends in the valley, and we danced through the night to samba and rumba Congolais CDs I had brought back from my travels. The dope smokers smoked joints in the basement. Outside it was 25 below. The sky was cloudless and ablaze with stars, and at one point Frank Owen, Keene Valley's great abstract expressionist painter (whose wife Martha Lee had sold us the property), and I went out on the deck and watched several fireballs come shooting down from the star-studded sky and burn out on the snowy slopes of the Cascades.

In 1997 my family and I moved up to Montreal and from then on we spent less and less time at Ravencroft. Finally, in January of this year, after an 18-year legal battle with the bank, I got what I could out of the house and have cut my losses and moved on.

But that's par for the course.

Alex Shoumatoff has published 10 books and more than 100 pieces of literary journalism from all over the world. He is a former staff writer for *The New Yorker* and contributing editor for *Vanity Fair*, *Outside*, *Esquire*, *Conde Nast Traveler*, *Travel & Leisure*, and *onEarth*. "Memories of Ravencroft" has been distilled from his forthcoming book, about his 70-year association with the Adirondack Mountains.

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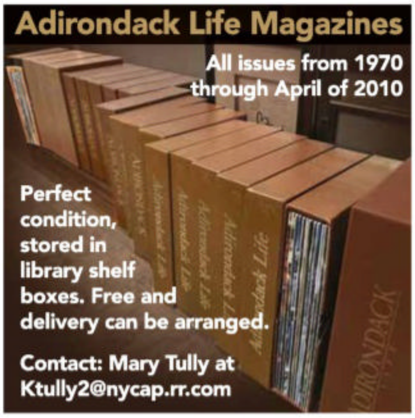
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Music Lessons

Composing our stories to the rhythms of nature

BY MARK PHILLIPS

It is easy to imagine that spring in the Adirondacks is a concert. The trills of toads and background refrains of frogs and the choral fervor of coyotes. The staccatos and crescendos of waterfowl and the tremulous songs of meadow and forest birds. A white-throated sparrow whistling "Taps" at dusk while I sit in a rocking chair on the porch of my Long Lake cabin. Surrounded by the sounds of wildlife in spring, I tend to forget that if it is music I hear, portions express more than the joy I frequently feel at the passing of winter, including aggression and sexuality and probably various urges and needs beyond my comprehension. I mostly guess at the meanings of vocalizations by wildlife. I react to them and try to make them my own. I call them songs. I write the lyrics.

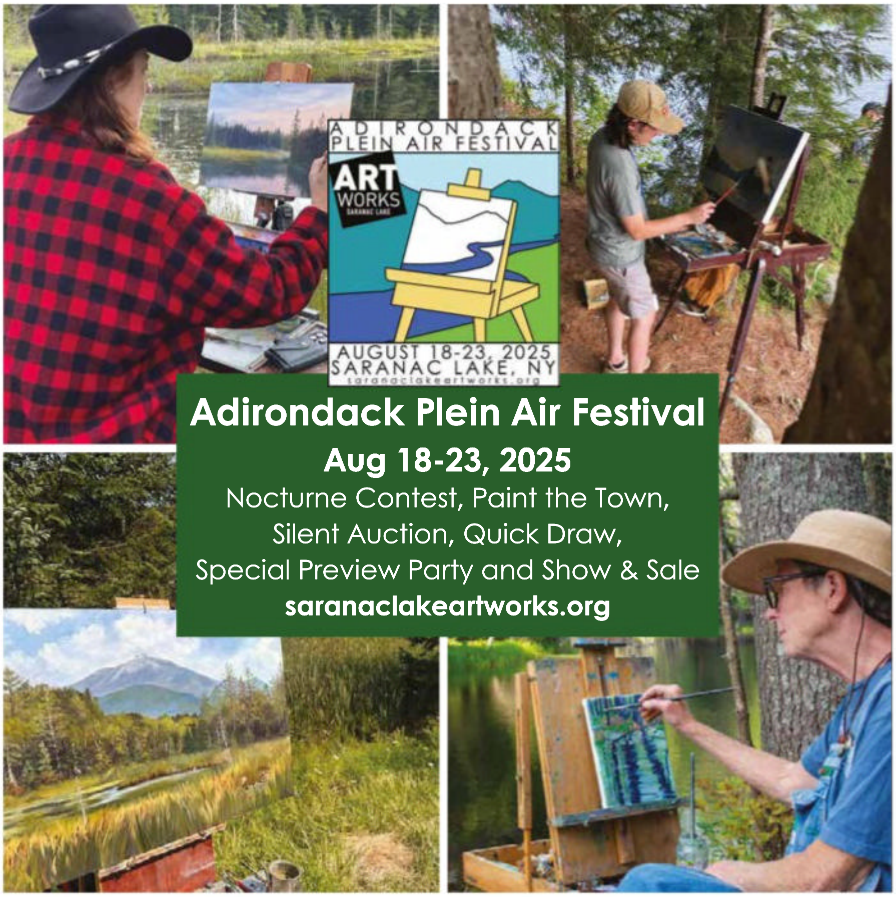
Archaeologists in Europe uncovered a flute that was made from a swan bone around 35,000 years ago, a discovery that leads me to wonder whether a Paleolithic musician used the bone solely because, like most avian bones, it was hollow, or also because the musician hoped to play the flute as beautifully as swans whistle. Yet was it the musician who killed the swan?

What might the flute tunes have evoked about the natural world and the humans who survived in it many millenniums before my foraging in supermarkets? If I could hear the singing of the first hunter-gatherers who entered the region now called the Adirondacks, it might be so unfamiliar that I wouldn't recognize it as music. Yet when I was in a small canoe loaded with food and camping gear and caught in a sudden windstorm on Little Tupper Lake, I began singing a traditional Siouan song I sometimes listen to on my computer back home. I knew little about the meaning of the lyrics, but my ignorance failed to matter while I belted out and mangled music in rhythm to whitecaps lifting and dropping the canoe. I didn't wish to hear the wind and water: I desired to hear my life.

Although the overall rhythms of nature are cyclical, I tend to translate them into meanings that parallel my linear and finite life. Migrating geese are making more or less the same calls regardless of the season, but to me the flocks sound ecstatic in coming and bittersweet in going. From my cabin porch one night, I heard what sounded like a distant beeping of a car alarm, but it seemed to be pulsing from unbroken forest; I heard it again the next night, though coming from a different location in the forest, and finally, after going inside to consult a guidebook, I realized I had been hearing the leitmotif of a saw-whet owl. I then automatically assumed that the bird was seeking a mate, its call expressing a longing with which, on that particular night, I had cause to commiserate. In a letter included in a posthumously published collection of his correspondence, the neurologist and author Oliver Sacks observed, "Everything we build is an allegory of ourselves: the whole human world a metaphor of the human state." He could have added—with equal accuracy—"including every story we construct about nature."

Migrant geese are making more or less the same calls regardless of season, but to me the flocks sound ecstatic in coming and bittersweet in going.

I needed such a story in winter a decade ago when my wife first had brain cancer. Arctic cold had dipped into New York State. While taking a walk in the woods, the trees clattering and moaning, I paused to stand still and close my eyes. The wind gusts began to sound like ocean surf and transfigured my location to a warm beach. I was soon



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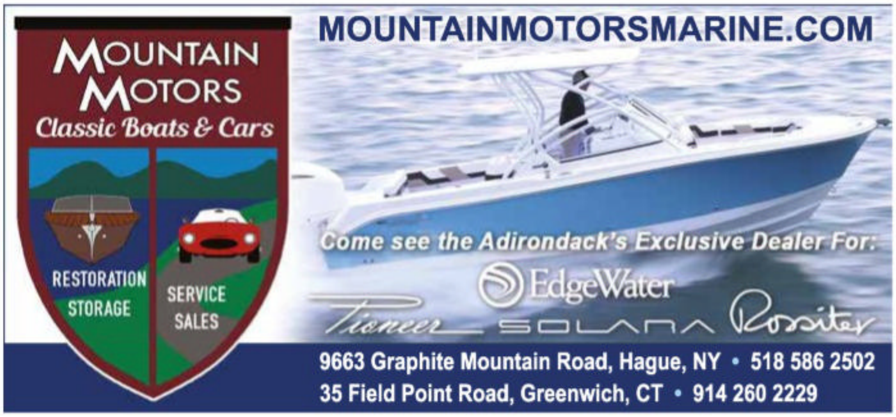
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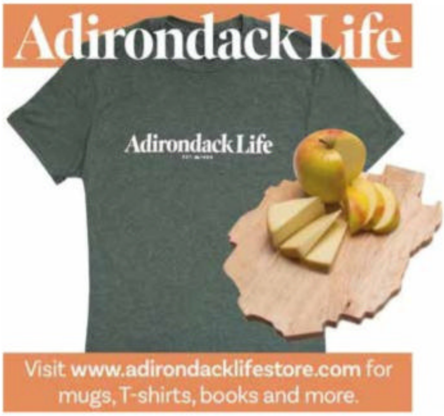
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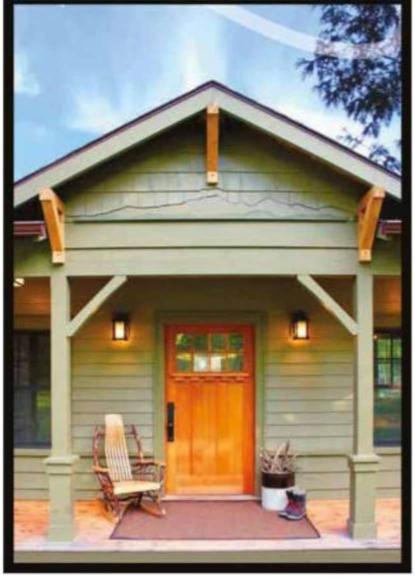
back in the woods, of course, a somewhat long hike home still ahead, but felt changed by my short seaside hiatus. The moaning of the trees began to sound like bassoon music. I constructed a story of endurance: boles bending and straightening and crowns twirling, a few silent birds perched and swaying with the dance of the wind and trees as if overly enthusiastic balletomanes. Yet that story wasn't quite enough. I needed more encouragement, perhaps a foreshadowing of spring to help me endure a sadness that verged on despair, which is one reason why in late winter I thought to check the health of my honeybee colony in the Alleghenies of New York, the region where I reside for most of the year. I tapped at the hive body and listened with an ear pressed to the wood and heard the whirring of bees clustered for warmth, a sound that meant the colony was likely to survive long enough to gather sustenance from the blooms of pussy willows in early spring; and a month later, as the field bees foraged, I set up a lawn chair close to the hive, opened a bottle of beer, and sat down to see and listen to rejuvenation. The colony was humming. To me, on that sunny afternoon, a hosanna.

On one of the final mornings of last spring, I drove several miles from my cabin to fish for bass in Forked Lake. A loon called in the mist out on the water. I answered from my canoe, and we went on exchanging yodels even after we were near enough to see each other. I told myself the bird was an incarnation of my wife, who had died the previous spring, and she had returned to a place we loved to say that she missed me as much as I did her. The loon dove and surfaced several times while I casted and retrieved a fishing lure over submersed boulders and waterlogged tree limbs. Eventually, a different loon called from elsewhere on the lake, prompting the departure of my musical companion, which was, after all, just a bird, just life.

Mark Phillips is the author of the 2001 memoir *My Father's Cabin*, which Arcade Publishing will reissue this May.



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It was a cool, perfect afternoon with fluffy clouds floating over Upper St. Regis Lake. My plan was to spend the day rowing my guideboat around the lake in search of a sunset composition for a photograph I had etched in my mind. I had borrowed a lantern from a friend, and brought along a red-and-black checkered wool blanket I had found on the back side of Colvin Mountain.

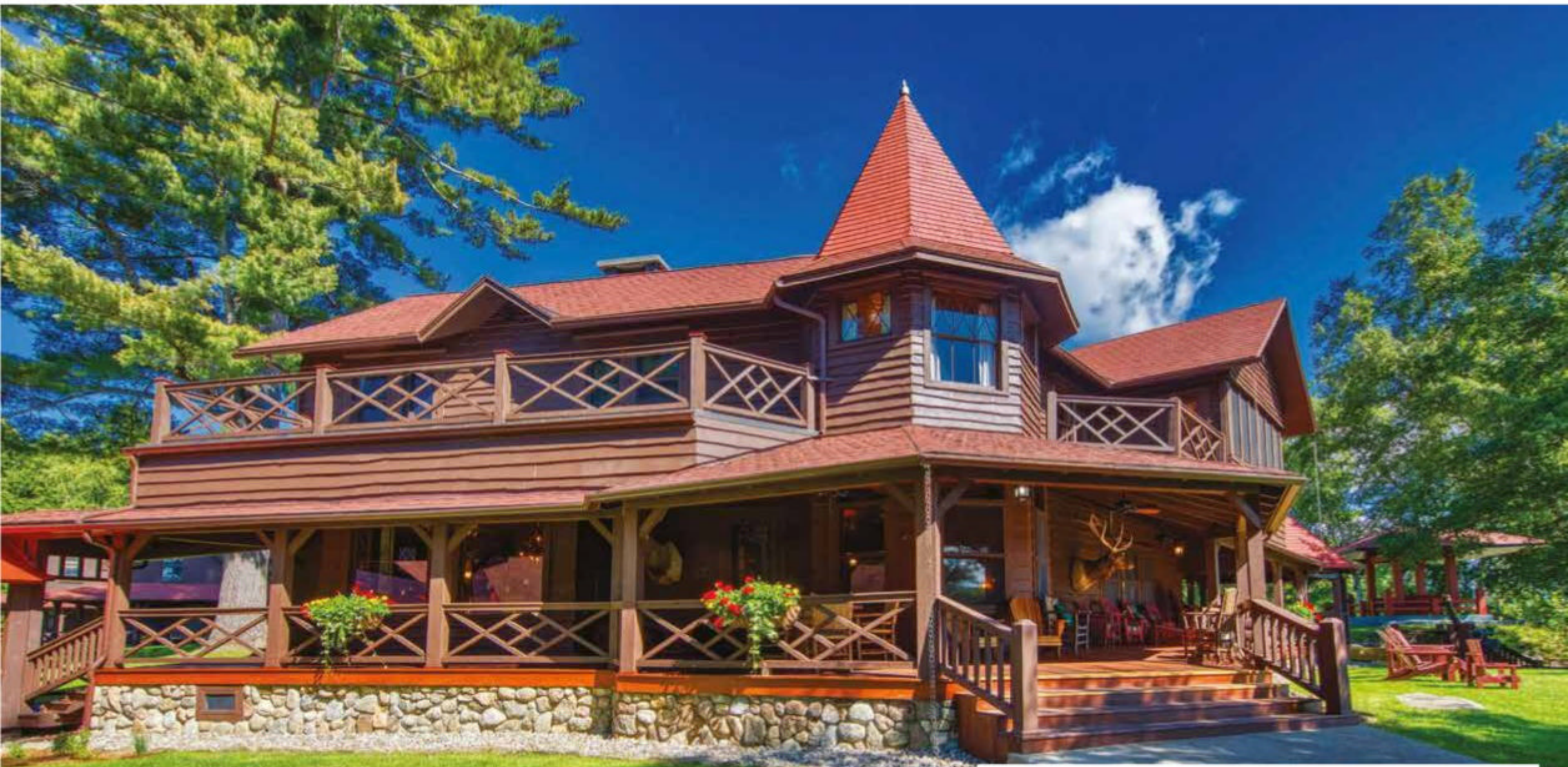
I determined the sun would set behind St. Regis Mountain. Then I located a cluster of islands with windswept pines framing the scene. All set. I lit the lantern, and bobbed about waiting for the sunbeam on the water to come to the lantern light. I held my breath, squeezed off 30 or 40 shots in hope that one image would not have boat-motion in it. I was lucky. One shot made the cut. I rowed back happy, ready to sleep inside my truck where there was a sleeping bag, pillow, and heat if needed, as I had plans for early morning photographs as well.

When I arrived at the landing it was nearly dark. Earlier I had somehow locked my keys and phone inside my truck. No one was around. Lights twinkled across the lake from people snug in their camps having dinner, probably a fire blazing in a stone hearth. Temperatures fell into the low 40s. It was a long night lying in the bed of my truck, shivering in that wool blanket, a camera bag for a pillow.

At daybreak, a caretaker for one of the Great Camps arrived at the landing. I used his phone to call my wife. An hour later, I was pacing the main road when my wife drove up. She rolled down the window, laughing at the blanket-attire hanging from my head to my knees, then handed me the spare keys, shook her head, and drove away.

When I got home and edited the photograph, the long night was well worth it. (See the cover of this magazine.) All in all, I secretly enjoyed my little venture, especially when loons were calling throughout the night, and there were a billion stars looking down at me.

TEXT AND PHOTOGRAPH BY JOE RECTOR



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Introducing Wenonah Lodge, an illustrious Adirondack Great Camp meticulously crafted by financier Julius Bache in 1897. Poised gracefully along the shores of Upper Saranac Lake, this architectural marvel exudes a harmonious blend of Victorian opulence and subtle Japanese influences, setting it apart as a singular masterpiece amidst the panorama of turn-of-the-century lakefront properties. Nestled within its own private sanctuary, the Main camp presents a compelling offering, boasting 9 exquisitely appointed bedrooms, accompanied by 6 baths and a remarkable ensemble of 10 fireplaces that infuse every corner with warmth and grandeur. Rustic interior finishes exemplify Adirondack charm with birch bark walls, peeled-log beams, and decorative hardware. The property's allure extends beyond its walls, featuring an expansive 235 feet of shoreline with unparalleled vistas of the lake and mountains. Additionally, the property offers a children's playhouse, tea house, 2-slip boathouse, and an inviting sandy beach. Notably, the Wenonah Main Lodge shares its idyllic domain with two equally esteemed properties, bestowing the owners with a harmonious sense of community, cherished by all fortunate enough to call this haven home. You'll be captivated by the impeccable preservation of the lodge, a true testament to its enduring charm. Immerse yourself in a seamless turn-key experience, where many of the original furnishings, carefully curated by Mr. Bache himself, still grace the spaces, preserving the legacy and authenticity of a bygone era. Wenonah Lodge stands as an embodiment of timeless elegance, where history and nature converge to craft an extraordinary narrative. A truly unparalleled opportunity.

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